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*Poetry of the Orient*

# *Poetry of the Orient*

## AN ANTHOLOGY

*of the Classic Secular Poetry of the Major Eastern Nations*

EDITED BY

EUNICE TIETJENS

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TO

THE POETS

OF OUR OWN DAY, SO MANY OF THEM

MY FRIENDS,

WITH THIS WORD FROM AN ARABIAN

COMPEER OF LONG AGO;

*" There is no writer that shall not perish, but what his hand hath written endureth ever.*

*Write, therefore, nothing but what will please thee when thou shalt see it on the day of judgment."*

34534

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# *Introduction*

THIS VOLUME, conceived in homage to the great poets of the Orient, has had throughout its preparation one central idea, to present to the west the great work of the eastern poets simply and coherently. In these days when the eyes of the west are turning more and more towards the east it has seemed to me fitting that some western poet should make a choice from the vast amount of literature on the subject, and should present the poetry of the east, not as the fruit of scholarship, a subject for instruction, nor yet as a peg on which to hang our own colourful imaginings of a fantastic Orient, but simply, as it was written.

In all ages the poet has been counted the spokesman of his race and his time. In many early civilizations he was the only hope of the approbation of posterity, and was honoured accordingly. Even today in moments of stress the nation turns for justification to its poets. Yet a poet is always more than a race phenomenon. He is an individual. In himself and for himself he exists; as himself he should be judged.

All this we know well when it concerns the poets of our own race. Yet, when the singer belongs to another race and time, we are apt to bring to the reading of his work a whole world of preconceived ideas and imaginings, of prejudices and comments, which hinder us from seeing him as he was. There have been moments in the preparation of this volume when, perusing as best I might the limitless — yes, virtually limitless — amount of scholarly research, of learned comment or ecstatic vaporings that have been written on the poetry

of the various nations represented here, I have been appalled at my own temerity in venturing such a book.

Yet, reading the poems themselves, I have taken comfort. These singers, remote as they are in time and space, were made of the same stuff as ourselves. Their thoughts were as our thoughts, their preoccupations as ours, their hope and their success, their doubt and their frustration as ours. They are our brothers, older brothers and greater than we, since they have each stood the test of centuries among those for whom they wrote specifically. It is not for us to sit in judgment upon them; it is for us to accept them as they are.

Yet a poet, coming to us in translation, has inevitably lost something of himself. His work is at best like a landscape seen through a window. The correctness of the impression we receive depends entirely upon the glass through which we see, and unfortunately all too often this glass distorts as much as it reveals. Few indeed are the translations of so crystal a clarity that we may perceive through them not only the sense, but also the overtones of magic which surround this sense in all great poetry.

No one is more conscious than the translator himself of the thanklessness of his task. The fine shades of which he is so conscious continually escape him; the symbols which in the original are fraught with magic in another language turn cold or shallow or merely strange. The weight of foreign names drags at his verse. In order to translate perfectly he has need to be as great a poet as the one he is translating, which, alas, is seldom possible. Rabindranath Tagore, the great Indian poet, said to me once that when he tried to put his poems over into English, in spite of his familiarity with our tongue he could not translate them, he was obliged to recreate them in this new medium. If the task is so difficult for the poet himself, how

much more so is it for a translator, born centuries later than his author, in another hemisphere? Nor do we dare to say, as a translator of indifferent success once told me, that whenever he translated a poem he improved it, " toned it up " I think were his words.

The whole subject of translating is a moot one, and many theories are held concerning its intricacies. This is hardly the place to go deeply into the question, but a word on the subject may not be amiss.

Translations fall in the main into four principal classes. There are first of all those translators who reproduce as well as they may the form of the original, its rhythmic and rhyme scheme, sticking as close to the sense as is possible under the circumstances of a greatly differing language. These hope to preserve by this means something of the magic of the original, and to give at the same time — through the form — some sense of the race color which developed these forms.

Next are those — though this idea of translation is not so popular as it once was — who feel that to reproduce a form exactly is to distort it, since the ear which must receive this form is not the same ear as that for which it was written. Such a translator feels that in English, for instance, in which a three-four rhythm is the normal one, a poem in four-four time has about it a certain strangeness which such a poem does not have to an ear accustomed by the genius of another language to such a rhythm. He therefore translates the rhythm into one native to us, hoping thus to give the impression that the original gives to its native readers. There is here an obvious danger, since the judgment of the translator alone can decide whether the effect produced is that which he seeks. This theory is that upon which most of the earlier translations were made, when it was felt that the

Orient for instance was essentially strange and must be approached with caution. With the growth of a wider knowledge and a more nearly world outlook this form of translation seems to be dying out, though it is still occasionally found.

The third translator is he who, finding that it is very seldom possible to do justice to both form and content, sticks to the content and lets the form take care of itself. He translates into free verse, whatever the original form may have been. This form of translation is in the ascendant now, and most of the recent renderings from the Chinese for instance belong in this class.

The fourth, and last, type of translator is he who, despairing of doing justice to the original in any form whatever, sets down in prose of scrupulous exactitude the precise shade of meaning as he sees it, and trusts that the reader, being furnished with the facts so far as he can give them, will supply the magic.

It is evident that success may be attained by any of these means, since the ability of the translator counts in the last analysis more than any possible theory. Specimens of all four classes will be found in this volume, though the last is least often represented.

Another factor which needs mention is the element of fashion, to which poetry, like everything else in a world of flux, is subject. Every poem seems to go through three periods in its history. The first period is that in which it was written, when the idiom is that of its own day and it speaks directly to its hearers. The second follows after a few years, when the idiom is somewhat old-fashioned and out of date. This is the period of greatest danger for a poem. If it survives it comes at last into a third period in which it receives as it were an added charm by the very archaic quality of its idiom and its images. To such a haven have come those poems which have survived

in the early English fashion. Time can do no more than add to the enchantment of such a poem as Herrick's " Delight in Disorder."

A poem in translation however suffers from the added difficulty that it must twice survive this same process, once in itself and once in translation. I have been much struck in the long labour of reading and digesting, of comparing and sorting, with this element of fashion in translations. The early translators from the eastern languages smoothed out those oriental idioms and ways of thought which seemed to them too exuberant or free-spoken for the delicacy and decorum of their own country and times. A translation from the late Arabic reprinted here, published by Leonard Chappelow in 1765, with its airs and graces and its quaint foot-notes, is a good example of this process. The present tendency on the other hand is perhaps to sharpen the images and ways of thinking of the Orient to conform to our own contemporary ideas of conciseness and intensity. Amy Lowell stands as perhaps the best example of this tendency. The reader who is interested in the chronology of the translations will find the volumes listed in the bibliography in the order of their publication.

As a concrete instance of the difference in effect produced by various translations I give here four renderings by different translators, each good in its own way, of the same short poem by Li Po. Perhaps, by reading them all, we may arrive at some true idea of what the original is like, as a surveyor, by taking several slants at a mountain, can measure it.

THOUGHTS IN A TRANQUIL NIGHT

Athwart the bed
I watch the moonbeams cast a trail

So bright, so cold, so frail,
That for a space it gleams
Like hoar-frost on the margin of my dreams.
I raise my head —
The splendid moon I see:
Then droop my head,
And sink to dreams of thee —
My fatherland, of thee!

*L. Cranmer-Byng*

## NIGHT THOUGHTS

I wake, and moonbeams play around my bed,
Glittering like hoar-frost to my wondering eyes;
Up towards the glorious moon I raise my head,
Then lay me down — and thoughts of home arise.

*Herbert A. Giles*

## ON A QUIET NIGHT

I saw the moonlight before my couch,
And wondered if it were not the frost on the ground.
I raised my head and looked out on the mountain moon;
I bowed my head and thought of my far-off home.

*Shigeyoshi Obata*

## NIGHT THOUGHTS

In front of my bed the moonlight is very bright.
I wonder if that can be frost on the floor?
I lift up my head and look full at the full moon, the dazzling moon.
I drop my head, and think of the home of old days.

*Florence Ayscough and Amy Lowell*

Among all the innumerable existing translations it has been my task to choose. And, in choosing, I have been governed in every case by one consideration, that the translation shall be poetry in its English dress. For I conceive that a poem is first, last and always a poem, and only very secondarily a sequence of ideas. If I found no translation which seemed to me poetry I omitted the original, preferring to let it wait for its presentation till some later time when it shall have been adequately rendered.

The second major idea which I have had in mind in the preparation of the volume is the desire to bring to bear on the subject of oriental poetry some sense of coherence and some slight idea of historic background. The Orient is to western eyes an almost incredible mixture of races, ideals and civilizations; so much so that it is extremely difficult for us to form any coherent idea of it at all. Not only are the major nations hard to differentiate, but their interplay has been so great through the ages that there are a thousand intermediate shades between nation and nation. The main lines are obscured. Simplicity in presentation is almost impossible.

Nevertheless certain main tendencies, certain race colors, do emerge, and can be differentiated. In this volume I have perhaps over-simplified the effect by sticking to these main tendencies. Only the poetry of the major nations, and only the classic poetry of each nation has been included. And I have chosen among the classic poems those which seem most representative. Thus it seems to me that each section here given makes a solid impact when considered as a whole, an impact which is different in the case of each nation. So the reader who is not a specialist can form some coherent idea of the main race tendencies of the Orient.

To the specialist this volume must seem at best a popular out-

line. Yet I have tried to hold the balance between the scholar and the poet. Scholarship has been invaluable in making knowledge of these poems and their authors possible, and to scholarship I am profoundly indebted for historic background, for dates — which I have given whenever I could find them — for the lives and character of the poets, in many cases for the translations themselves. None the less, with certain notable exceptions, the scholar is seldom a poet, just as the poet is less than seldom an oriental scholar. The present day method, by which translations are made by a scholar and a poet, working in harness, seems the best way out of the dilemma.

This book has one great omission; it contains no religious poetry. The enormous volume of material and the physical limitations of space have made it impossible to include everything, and since the volume of oriental mystic poetry is almost as great as the amount of secular verse, it has seemed best to omit it altogether, rather than to represent it inadequately. This omission has however eliminated from the book certain nations which, had their religious poetry been represented, would have had an important place here. Chief among these is the nation of the Hebrews, whose early mystic poetry has seldom if ever been equalled. Ancient Egypt also, and certain smaller nations, have been reluctantly passed by. The bulk of the poetry of these nations in the great periods was almost purely religious in character, at least this is so as it is represented in translations in English. For the purpose of this volume it has been necessary that a nation should have a considerable volume of secular classic poetry, and that it shall have been adequately translated into English in considerable quantity also.

One of the besetting difficulties of compiling this anthology has been that of eliminating the great mass of pseudo-oriental renderings,

the "interpretations" and "fantasies" which have always clung about the mysterious lands of the east. For one who, like myself, can lay no claim to scholarship, this has been no easy task. Yet I have lived in several of the lands here represented and have some knowledge of the race character behind the poems, so that many of these renderings have been no sooner seen than eliminated. For the rest I have had recourse to scholarship, checking wherever possible, and seeking knowledge more thorough than my own.

To the best of my belief there are only two poems here included which are more nearly interpretations than translations. The first is Edward FitzGerald's famous version of the "Rubaiyat" of Omar Khayyam, and the second is Edward Powys Mathers' rendering of the "Chaurapanchasika" by Kashmirian Bilhana. Neither of them is literal enough to fit into the general scheme of this book. But every principle has its human limitations, and I have not been able to resist the great beauty as English poetry of these two. Other renderings with less excuse for being may have slipped past me, unchecked. If so, I can only crave indulgence; I have sincerely tried everywhere to eliminate translations too far from the originals.

One or two other decisions may deserve a word. In every case translations have been omitted which do not give their source, no matter how good the result, as I consider it essentially unethical and unjust to a poet not to credit him with his work. All translations credited simply "From the Chinese," or "From the Arabic" are therefore not represented. In the many cases where only part of any given poem has been used I have as a rule, though not always, omitted the asterisks, conceiving that, where the sense goes on, asterisks stand in the way of the reader's enjoyment, which has been my chief preoccupation always. For the same reason, and because the whole sub-

ject is very confusing at best, I have omitted almost all the diacritical marks with which scholars are wont to distinguish the subtleties of oriental sounds.

With regard to the almost insoluble difficulty of the transliteration of the difficult eastern names, especially the names of the poets of the Near East, I can only say that I have done the best I could. Confronted with the fact that there are at least half a dozen ways of writing each of these names, all in use by reputable scholars, I have chosen in every case what seems to me to be the most comprehensible form for which I could find adequate authority. In some cases I have added in parentheses other forms which are so far removed that the reader might not recognize them as the same name.

For the rest I have only this to say. The Orient has been much "interpreted" of late. The growing necessity which we feel to understand our brothers of the east has given rise to a whole literature of explanation and interpretation. Much of this literature is and has been valuable, though by the same token much of it has been hardly more than imaginative twaddle. In this volume no such attempt at interpretation is made. The short introductions, one to each section, are intended only as the simplest possible guide to the poetry represented, to differentiate it from the other sections, and to give some slight historic background.

Here the Orient speaks for itself, with its own multitudinous voices of beauty, of passion, and of aspiration. Here the poet-spokesmen of civilizations far older than our own sing to us directly, as they would wish to sing, altered and judged as little as our means permit. Here is material for the quickening of our spirits, measured only by our own capacity to be quickened. "Here at any rate" to quote Arthur W. Ryder's admirable introduction to the work of

Kalidasa "there shall be none of that cold-blooded criticism which imagines itself set above a world-author to appraise and judge, but a generous tribute of affectionate admiration."

EUNICE TIETJENS

*Sidi-Bou-Saïd, Tunisia, North Africa,*
*February, 1927*

*Arabia*

# *The Poetry of Arabia*

The poetry of the Arabs is the poetry of freedom. In the days of his greatness — the "Days of Ignorance," before Mohammed rose to preach Islam — the Arab poet was a free man, and a warrior. He was a Bedouin, a nomad, riding his beast between sand and sky. He was free of the desert and the stars. The laws of his little tribe, primitive laws for a primitive life, were all he knew, and they sat lightly upon him. He knew nothing of writing, nothing of the drag of civilization. His poetry was his heart, and his heart was free.

The inhibitions with which we are bound to-day were not in him. If he fought, he fought with his whole soul, glorying in his strength; if he bragged, it was as a child brags, magnificently, dramatically; his love was simple and direct, full of tenderness; and when he mourned, his mourning was deep and noble and unself-conscious as a sand-storm.

Only the laws of nature were inevitable, and he accepted these laws in the same spirit of proud submission with which his brother the North American Indian accepted them. Nature was always with him, and he was never shut away from it. The great reaches of the desert, the sweep of the sky, the bare sharp mountains with their crashing storms, the feel of his mount between his knees, these were his daily life. No poet in any land or time has understood animals as he understood them. We know his camel and his horse as we know himself.

The keynote of the Arab character was, and is to-day, justice, as he understands justice, which is not always as we understand it. His ideal virtues were justice, hospitality loyalty to his tribe, bravery and generosity. Of religion, in the old days, he had little beyond a sort of sturdy respect for the maker of stars and deserts. Of combat he knew much, since the wandering tribes were constantly at war with one another.

All these things the poet of the "Days of Ignorance" set down with the utmost scrupulousness, for it was an accepted law among them that the poet must sing of nothing which he had not himself experienced. Sir Charles Lyall, the great English authority on Arabic poetry, takes as the essence of it these words from Zuhair,

> "Of all the verses which thou hast made, the fairest in praise is that whereof, when they hear, men say — 'Yea, that is the Truth.'"

The poetry which has been preserved to us from the "Days of Ignorance" was all composed in the century before the rise of Islam, that is from about 520 to 620 A.D. Much of it centers around certain tribal wars, of which the War of Basus was the most famous. The greatest poet of this time, and perhaps the greatest of all Arabian poets, was Imru-al-Kais, whose work has a vitality and a grandeur seldom equalled in any time or place. His "Mu-allakat" is the most famous poem in Arabic. Tradition says, probably erroneously, that this poem with six others, each by a different poet, was at a later time, after writing was known to the Arabs, written in letters of gold and suspended in the temple at Mecca. For which reason they are known as "The Seven Poems," or "The Golden (or Suspended) Poems." Other great names of the period are Labid, Zuhair, Antara and Tarafa.

This early poetry served a double purpose, for in it were preserved the tribal records. Writing being unknown to them, the poet was their one medium for transmitting the past. He was called "ash-Sha'ir," "the knowing man," and was supposed to have more than natural knowledge. The appearance of a poet in a tribe was greeted with joy and feasting, for the poet could sing their praises, or by means of satire, which they used as a weapon, could pillory their enemies for all time. The poems were handed down by the professional *rawi*, or reciter, whose business it was to keep them intact.

Even to this day such reciters, who now tell in addition to the poetry the colorful old romances, sit in the market places discoursing to willing ears. Once in the oasis of Nefta in southern Tunisia we came upon such a reciter, a blind man, surrounded by a group of squatting Arabs in flowing burnouses, and abetted by an assistant with a drum. The man was crying as he recited, tears flowing from his sightless eyes and rolling down his cheeks. A friend whose Arabic

was equal to the occasion spoke to him. "Why are you crying?" he asked. "I am reciting the poetry of Imru-al-Kais," was the answer, as though that were sufficient. "But the poem is not sad." "No, it is not sad. I cry because it is beautiful. We always cry when we recite his poetry."

The advent of Mohammed — the Hegira occurred in 622 A.D. — with his preaching of Islam, proved detrimental to the old poetry. Islam, which in its earlier stages was largely dogmatic, was unfertile soil for singing. In a century or so the old poetry was dead, though its traditional forms remained. Later the mysticism inherent in Islam, as in all religions, flowered in the sect of the Sufi, and, transplanted into Persia, gave birth to Jelal ud-Din Rumi and Hafiz. But for the time being, in Arabia poetry was snuffed out.

The mind of the Arab turned towards conquest, in the name of Islam. In less than two centuries he had conquered Jerusalem, Syria, Irak, Persia and Armenia, Egypt, Carthage and the greater part of the coast of North Africa. Later he added Spain to his conquests. The language of Arabia like its religion, became current in almost the whole Mediterranean basin. Arabia herself sank to the position of a mere province in the empire of the caliphate.

When the next great revival of poetry occurred, we find its character altogether changed. The luxurious life of the courts of the Caliphs, at Baghdad and Aleppo, the refining influence of Persia, the influence of Greece, the opening of vistas unknown in the "Days of Ignorance:" these and other influences had brought out the subtlety always inherent in the Arab character, and had changed the outlook on life. Islam sat lightly on them, as Christianity sits lightly in our life of to-day, and its repressions were no longer hindrances. Abu Nuwas, who feasted with the Caliph Harun al-Rashid — his reign began in 787 A.D. — could make fun of the old forms, speaking scornfully of those who "yearn to a tent-peg."

The great poets of the later day did not come from Arabia itself, but from other parts of the empire. Abu'l-Ala and Mutanabbi were Syrian Arabs, Mu'tamid was a Spanish Arab. In their work the grandeur and the sweep, the nobility of the old days is gone, but in subtlety and sophistication they are closer to us to-day.

The standard classic form of the older poetry is the *kasida* or ode. Its origins are lost in the mists of antiquity, but it must have been in use for a long period before the earliest poems preserved to us, because by the time we meet it it is already set as to form and

substance, written in the same way by all the various and warring tribes.

The form is curious to our ears. Each line must be complete in itself, possibly as an aid to memory, and it frequently does nothing towards carrying forward the general outline of the poem, so that at first the effect is disjointed. The sequence of ideas also, which is absolutely set throughout the major part of the *kasida*, seems to us anything but inevitable.

The poet first visits in imagination a deserted camping-ground, from which the wandering tribe has departed to other fields. The contemplation of this recalls to his mind his lost love, who has departed with the tribe, and he usually indulges in grief at her loss. After this he flees across the desert mounted on a swift beast, a camel or horse, whose praises he sings usually in much greater detail than those of his lady love. Then at last he comes to the substance of his poem, which is usually a panegyric on some patron, on his tribe or on himself, or, more rarely, on his love. Occasionally the ride across the desert is omitted. The "Golden Ode," by Labid, is given here as an example of a complete *kasida*.

Aside from the *kasida* the early scholars recognize only the form called "fragment." This is often merely a fragment of an ode. Most of the shorter poems given here of the earlier period are of this sort. The one exception seems to be the elegy, a form in which they excelled in common with many early poets. In the elegy the introductory stanzas were considered unnecessary. The later poets used a number of more varied forms, especially a quatrain.

In all, sixteen metres were finally recognized, of which four, the *Tawil*, or long metre, the *Kamil*, or perfect metre, the *Wafir*, or ample metre, and the *Basit*, or wide metre, were generally in use. I quote from Mr. Reynold A. Nicholson's analysis of these, from his "Translations of Eastern Poetry and Prose."

I. The *Tawil* (Long) Metre:

⏑ – – ⏑ – – – ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ –
Arise, O | my mother's sons, | and breast with | your steeds the night, ||
⏑ – – ⏑ – – – ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ –
For truly | the love I bear | is kinder | to some less kin.

(Browning's "Abt Vogler" is a good example of this metre in English.)

II. The *Kamil* (Perfect) Metre:

⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ –
And I stopped to ask | whither gone are they? — | what avails to ask ||

– – ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ –
Things hard of hear | ing and dark of speech | that abide unchanged?

III. The *Wafir* (Ample) Metre:

⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ – – – ⏑ – –
No need, when in earth | the maid rests cov | ered over, ||
⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ – –
No need for her locks| of hair to be loosed | and plaited.

IV. The *Basit* (Wide) Metre.

– – ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – – – ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ –
Virtue is nei | ther a fast | consuming those | who it keep, ||
⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – – – ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ –
Nor any off | ice of prayer | nor rough fleece wrapped | on the limbs.

The Arabic language is more obviously quantitative than English, and abounds in rhymes. In the old odes a single rhyme was used throughout, in some instances as many as ninety rhymes being found for the same sound. Even if it were possible to reproduce such a *tour de force* in English, the effect to our ears would be monotonous to a degree. The translations therefore ignore this fact.

The poetry of the second great period of Arabic poetry early appealed to European taste, and, with the Persian which it resembles, was the first of all oriental poetry to be translated in any quantity. Indeed the earliest translation reprinted in this volume is of an Arabic poem by Abu'l-Ala, and was published in 1765. The pre-Islamic poetry on the other hand, although the immediacy of its experience and the directness of its sense impressions should appeal strongly to our generation, has only recently been translated by scholars, the only poet of any importance who has dealt with it being Wilfrid Scawen Blunt.

POETS OF THE

# "DAYS OF IGNORANCE"

*From the earliest times to the days of Mohammed*

## THE STORM

*by Imru-al-Kais (died about* 540 A.D.)

*(also spelled Amru-ul-Quais, Imr el Kais, Amriolkais)*

O friend — see the lightning there! it flickered, and now is gone,
as though flashed a pair of hands in the pillar of crownéd cloud.
Nay, was it its blaze, or the lamps of a hermit that dwells alone,
and pours o'er the twisted wicks the oil from his slender cruse?
We sat there, my fellows and I, twixt Darij and al-Udhaib,
and gazed as the distance gloomed, and waited its oncoming.

The right of its mighty rain advanced over Katan's ridge:
the left of its trailing skirt swept Yadhbul and as-Sitar;
Then over Kutaifah's steep the flood of its onset drave,
and headlong before its storm the tall trees were borne to ground;

*Imru-al-Kais was the greatest of the poets of the "Ignorance," or the period before Mohammed, and his* Mu-allakat, *of which these are the concluding lines, is the most celebrated poem in Arabic. The poet was a prince of the Banu Kindah. Throughout many years he sought vengeance for the death of his father Hujr, coming finally after many adventures to the court of the Emperor Justinian in Constantinople, where he was honorably received. He died on his way back, about* 540 A.D. *The cause of his death is said to have been a poisoned robe sent after him by Justinian, with whose daughter he had had an intrigue.*

*The Mu-allakat is one of "The Seven Poems."*

And the drift of its waters passed o'er the crags of al-Kanan,
and drave forth the white-legged deer from the refuge they sought therein.
And Taima — it left not there the stem of a palm aloft,
nor ever a tower, save one firm built on the living rock.
And when first its misty shroud bore down upon Mount Thabir,
he stood like an ancient man in a gray-streaked mantle wrapt.
The clouds cast their burden down on the broad plain of al-Ghabit,
as a trader from al-Yaman unfolds from the bales his store;
And the topmost crest on the morrow of al-Mujaimir's cairn
was heaped with the flood-borne wrack like wool on a distaff wound.

At earliest dawn on the morrow the birds were chirping blithe,
as though they had drunken draughts of riot in fiery wine;
And at even the drowned beasts lay where the torrent had borne them, dead, high up on the valley sides, like earth-stained roots of squills.

*Sir Charles Lyall*

## FRAGMENT FROM THE "MU-ALLAKAT"

*by Imru-al-Kais*

How many a noble tent hath oped its treasure
To me, and I have taken my fill of pleasure,
Passing the warders who with eager speed
Had slain me, if they might but hush the deed,
What time in heaven the Pleiades unfold
A belt of orient gems distinct with gold!

I entered. By the curtain there stood she,
Clad lightly as for sleep, and looked on me.
"By God," she cried, "what recks thee of the cost?
I see thine ancient madness is not lost."
I led her forth, she trailing as we go
Her broidered skirt lest any footprint show,
Until beyond the tents the valley sank
With curving dunes and many a piléd bank.

Toward me I drew her then by side-locks both,
Nor she — full-ankled, fine of waist — was loth.
Fair in her color, splendid in her grace,
Her bosom smooth as mirror's polished face:
A white pale virgin pearl such luster keeps,
Fed with clear water in untrodden deeps.
Half-turned away, a slant soft cheek, and eye
Of timid antelope with fawn close by,
She lets appear; and lo, the shapely neck
Not bare of ornament, else without a fleck,
Whilst from her shoulders in profusion fair,
Like clusters on the palm, down falls her coal-dark hair.

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

## FRAGMENT OF AN ODE

### *by Imru-al-Kais*

And oft in the early morn, when birds in their nest are still,
I ride whither he that comes to forage must fare alone —
A spring-pasture, one kept safe by spear-heads in watch and ward,
And rich with the floods poured forth from many a black storm-cloud —
On stout mare, a bay whose flesh her running made dry and tough,
As though 'twere, so hard it is, the staff of a weaver's beam.

I scared once with her a herd of wild kine: their skins pure white,
Unblemished; their legs bestriped like needle-wrought Yemen robes.
Mescemed, as they sped their pace and trotted, I saw a troop
Of horses that wheel about, with glistening saddle-cloths.
So wheeled they and set on guard behind them a lusty bull
Of long back and horns: his nose turns upward, his tail sweeps low;
Whilst I in pursuit bore on against bull and cow alike,
And bent to the chase, what time I followed it, all my mind.

As swift as an eagle swoops and softly her wings draws in
To snatch in the morning-shine a hare on Sherabba's height —
Her eyrie around lie fresh and shrivelled the hearts of birds,

As though the jujube's red fruit were mingled with crumbling dates —
The foxes that haunt Arwal have slunk to their holes in fear:
So under me flew the steed I hastened with hand and thighs.

Were that after which I strive my bare need, to live withal,
For me were a little wealth enough: I would seek no more;
But after renown I strive, a firm glory rooted deep,
And men such as I may win the glory most deep and firm.
How long in a man soe'er the breath of his spirit lasts,
He never will reach the end of craving or cease from toil.

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

## ON OLD AGE

### *by 'Amr son of Kami'ah (died about* 535 A.D.)

Now am I, that have passed the space of ninety years, as though on a day I had stripped off the cheek-straps of my bridle;
I raise myself painfully on three supports, by the help of my hands and a staff, and after that I stand upright.
The Daughters of Time have shot at me from a place which I could not see: and how should he fare who is shot at, while he cannot shoot in reply?
Yea, if it were an arrow that shot me, I could have defended myself against it: but I am shot with that which is not a shaft.
When men see me they say — "Art thou not he that but lately was bright with new arms and armour, no sluggish fighter?"
Yea, I perish: but of Time I cannot kill even a night; and that which I slay of him amounts not even to a thread for stringing beads upon.
I am slain by looking forward to day and night, and looking onward to year after year.

*Sir Charles Lyall*

## BRAGGING SONG

### *by a man of 'Abd al-Kais (date unknown)*

As soon as I saw before me the sons of Huyayy, I recognized in them my hatred and my vengeance.

I charged them with Wajrah, what time they shouted one to another to shoot from close at hand at her throat and mine.
When she had gone clean through them, she turned and dashed against them again, as though her foal and my first-born son were in the midst of them.
At Dhat ar-Rimth, what time they lowered the lances to receive us, whose points shone like glowing coals,
Then I blenched not, and showed no faint heart, but made straight for Abu Sakhr son of 'Amr.
I burst the joints of his harness with a thrust that went straight through him, in spite of haste and nervousness.
I left the spear-point gleaming in the middle of his back, looking as though its blade were the beak of a vulture;
And if he recovers, it will not be because I used charms over him; and if he dies, why, that was my purpose.

*Sir Charles Lyall*

## HE THINKS OF DEATH

### *by 'Abdallah of Hanifah (date unknown)*

Before the door of each and all a slumber-place is ready set: men wane and dwindle, and the graves in number grow from day to day;
And ever more and more out-worn the traces fade of hearth and home, and ever yonder for some dead is newly built a house of clay.
Yea, neighbors are they of the living: near and close their fellowship; but if thy soul would seek their converse, thou must seek it far away.

*Sir Charles Lyall*

## HE PRAISES HIS CAMEL

### *by Tarafa (about 560 A.D.)*

*Legend says that the origin of this poem was as follows. Tarafa's brother Mabad reproached him for neglecting the camels of his father, while he indulged in poetical reveries. One day Mabad said tauntingly, "If the camels should be lost, could you recover them by your poetry?" The poet assured him that he could. Whereupon*

*Mabad purposely neglected the camels, so that they were carried off by a rival tribe. Tarafa wrote the* kasida, *of which this description of a camel formed a part, and such was the power of a poem in those days that with the aid of a friendly chieftain he not only got the camels back, but a hundred head in addition as a reward. It is one of "The Seven Poems."*

* * *

Yet I have means to fly from grief, when such pursues me, on a lean high beast, which paces swiftly by day and by night,
A camel sure of foot, firm and thin as the planks of a bier, whom I guide surely over the trodden ways, ways etched in earth as texture is in cloth;
A she-camel, rival of the best, swift as an ostrich. When she trots her hind feet fall in the marks of her forefeet on the beaten road.

With her white feathery tail she lashes backward and forward. Sometimes the lash falls on her rider, sometimes on her own dried udder, where no milk is, flaccid as an old bottle of leather.
Firm and polished are her haunches as two worm jambs of a castle gate.
The bones of her spine are supple and well-attached, and her neck rises solidly.
When she raises her long neck it is like the rudder of a boat going up the Tigris.
She carries her strong thighs well apart, as a carrier of water holds apart his buckets.
Red is the hair under her chin. Strong she is of back, long of stride; easily she moves her forelegs.

The marks of the girths on her sides are as the marks of water-courses over smooth rock.
Sometimes the marks unite and sometimes are distinct, like the gores in fine linen, well-cut and stitched.
Her long skull is like an anvil, and where the bones unite their edges are sharp as the teeth of a file.
Her cheek is smooth as paper of Syria, and her upper lip like leather of Yemen, exactly and smoothly cut.
The two polished mirrors of her eyes gleam in the caverns of their sockets as water gleams in rocky pools.

Her ears are sharp to hear the low voices of the night, and not inattentive to the loud call,
Pricked ears, that show her breeding, like those of a lone wild bull in the groves of Haumel.
Her upper lip is divided and her nose pierced. When she stretches them along the ground her pace increases.
I touch her with my whip and she quickens her step, even though it be the time when the mirage shimmers on the burning sands.
She walks with graceful gait, as the dancing girl walks, showing her master the skirts of her trailing garment.

*Eunice Tietjens,*
*after Sir W. Jones and F. E. Johnson*

## FROM THE "MU'ALLAKAH"

*by Zuhair (sixth century* A.D.*)*
*(also spelled Zoheyr, Zohair)*

* * *

For you may not hide from God your dealings, what though in secrecy
deep in your heart of hearts you seal it. Nathless He knoweth it,
Knoweth and taketh note in patience, sure of His reckoning
till the day of the great counting, waiteth or hasteneth.
War! Ye have learned it all, its teachings, well have ye tasted them.
These no tales are that I tell you. Each is a certainty.
A smouldering coal ye flung it lightly, blindly despising it.
Lo, into raging flame it leapeth, wind-lit, destroyeth you.
Ye are ground as corn by hate's ill-grinding, flat on her grinding skin.
Nay, a too fruitful camel she. Twins hath she borne to you,
Sinister sons of fear and anger, milk-fed on bitterness;
dark as his, Aad's, their nursing. Lo, she is weaned of them.

*These are fragments from one of "The Seven Poems" which tradition says, probably erroneously, were suspended in the temple at Mecca because of their great beauty. They are also called "The Golden Odes."*

And her hand is large to rain you harvests, evil the wealth of them.
No such plenty Irak hath garnered, hell-grain and hate-money.

* * *

I am weary of life who bear its burdens fourscore and how many
years of glory and grief counted. Well may he weary be.
I know to-day, the day before it, ay, and the days that were,
yet of to-morrow I know nothing. Blind are the eyes of me.
I have seen Fate strike out in the darkness, strike like a blind camel:
some it touched died straight, some lingered on to decrepitude.

I have learned that he who giveth nothing, deaf to his friends' beg-
ging,
loosed shall be to the world's tooth-strokes: fools' feet shall
tread on him;
That he that doeth for his name's sake fair deeds shall further it,
but he that of men's praise is careless dwindleth in dignity;
That he, the lord of wealth, who spendeth naught of his heaped
money,
him his kinsfolk shall hold lightly: children shall mouth at him;
That he who keepeth faith shall find faith; who in simplicity
shall pursue the ways accustomed, no tongue shall wag at him;
That he who flieth his fate shall meet it, not, though a sky-ladder
he should climb, shall his fear fend him: dark death shall noose
him down;
That he who gifteth the unworthy, spendthrift through idleness,
praised shall be to his dispraising, shamed at his fool-doing;
That he, who shall refuse the lance-butts borne by the peace-bearers,
him the lance-heads shall find fenceless, naked the flesh of him;
That he who guardeth not his tent-floor, with the whole might of
him,
cold shall be his hearth-stone broken, ay, though he smote at
none;
That he who fleeth his kin shall fare far, foes for his guest-fellows;
that he who his own face befouleth none else shall honor him;
That he, who casteth not the burdens laid on the back of him,
sheer disgrace shall be his portion, waged as he merited;
That whatso a man hath by nature, wit-wealth or vanity,
hidden deep, the day shall prove it: all shall be manifest.
For how many sat wise while silent, yet was their foolishness

proved when their too much, too little, slid through their
mouth-slitting!
The tongue is the strong man's half; the other half is the heart of
him:
all the rest is a brute semblance, rank corporeality.
Truly, folly in the old is grievous; no cure is known for it:
yet may the young their soul's unwisdom win to new sanity.

We asked once, and you gave a guerdon — twice and again you gave:
only the mouth that hath no silence endeth in emptiness.

*Wilfrid Scawen Blunt,*
*after Lady Ann Blunt*

## FROM THE "GOLDEN ODE"

*by Antara (end of sixth century* A.D.)

Close have I kept to the war-words thy father once spoke to me,
how I should deal in the death-play, when lips part and teeth
glitter,
When in the thick of the combat heroes unflinchingly
cry in men's ears their defiance, danger forgot by them.
Close have I kept them and stood forth their shield from the enemy,
calling on all with my war-cries, circling and challenging.
There where the horsemen rode strongest I rode out in front of them,
hurled forth my war-shout and charged them; no man thought
blame of me.
Antar! they cried; and their lances, well-cords in slenderness,
pressed to the breast of my war-horse still as I pressed on them.
Doggedly strove we and rode we. Ha, the brave stallion!
now is his breast dyed with blood-drops, his star-front with fear
of them!
Swerved he, as pierced by the spear-points. Then in his beautiful
eyes stood the tears of appealing, words inarticulate.
If he had learned our man's language, then had he called to me:
if he had known our tongue's secret, then had he cried to me.

Thus to my soul came consoling; grief passed away from it
hearing the heroes applauding, shouting: Ho, Antar, Ho!
Deep through the sand-drifts the horsemen charged with teeth grimly
set,

urging their war-steeds, the strong-limbed, weight bearers all
of them.
Swift the *deluls* too I urged them, spurred by my eagerness
forward to high deeds of daring, deeds of audacity.
Only I feared lest untimely death drear should shorten me
ere on the dark sons of Demdem vengeance was filled for me.
These are the men that reviled me, struck though I struck them not,
vowed me to bloodshed and evil or ere I troubled them.
Nay, let their hatred o'erbear me! I care not. The sire of them
slain lies for wild beasts and vultures. Ha! for the sacrifice!

*Wilfrid Scawen Blunt,*
*after Lady Ann Blunt*

## HE WARNS HIS FOE

### *by 'Amr son of Kulthum (about* 570 A.D.)

Father of Hind, take heed and e'er thou movest
Rashly against us, learn
That still our banners go down white to battle
And home blood-red return.
And many a chief bediademed, the champion
Of the outlaws of the land,
Have we o'erthrown and stripped him, whilst around him
Fast-reined the horses stand.
Our neighbors lopped like thorn-trees, snarls in terror
Of us the demon-hound; [1]
Never we try our hand-mill on the foemen
But surely they are ground.
We are the heirs of glory, all Ma'add knows,
Our lances it defend,
And when the tent-pole tumbles in the foray,
Trust us to save our friend!

* * *

Well know, when our tents rise along their valleys,
The men of every clan
That we give death to them that durst attempt us,
To friends what food we can;

[1] The Jinn, or spirits.

That stanchly we maintain a cause we cherish,
Camp where we choose to ride,
Nor will we aught of peace, when we are angered,
Till we be satisfied.
We keep our vassals safe and sound, but rebels
We soon force to their knees;
And if we reach a well, we drink pure water,
Others the muddy lees.
Ours is the earth and all thereon: when *we* strike,
There needs no second blow;
Kings lay before the new-weaned boy of Taghlib
Their heads in homage low.
We are called oppressors, being none, but shortly
A true name shall it be!
We have so filled the earth, 'tis narrow for us,
And with our ships the sea!

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

## THE RACE OF SIMMAH

### *by Duraid* (535–630 A.D.)

"Weepest thou not," said she, "for thy brother? " Ay, and sooth enough
cause there is for tears, but that my frame was builded to endure.
"Whom wouldst thou that I should weep for," said I — "Abdallah the dear,
or the slain of Abu Bakar, he whose grave is on the height,
Or that other, 'Abd-Yaghuth, round whom the ravens croak and hop?
sore bereavement, load of sorrow — one grave filled, another dug!

*Duraid is one of the most striking figures of the close of pagan Arabia. He was a great chieftain and warrior and made "near a hundred expeditions" in his life, all successful. He lived to be very old, and many tales are told of him. At the last when he was nearly a hundred he was carried into battle against the forces of Mohammed on a camel litter, and so died fighting against Islam.*

"Slaughter chose from all men born the race of Simmah for her own:
they chose her, and would none other: so fate goes to fated end.
Yea, and if our blood be ever end and aim of vengeful hands,
striving day by day to spill it till the days shall be no more,
Flesh to feed the sword are we, and unrepining meet our doom:
well we feed him, slain or slaying, joyfully he takes our food!
Hearts are cured of rancor-sickness, whether men against us war,
or we carry death among them: dying, slaying, healing comes!
So we halve our days between us, we and all men else our foes:
no day passes but it sees us busy with this deed or that."

*Sir Charles Lyall*

## A DIRGE FOR HER BROTHER MU'AWIYA

*by the Lady al-Khansa (about 600 A.D.)*

Tears, ere thy death, for many a one I shed,
But thine are all my tears since thou art dead.
To comforters I lend my ear apart,
While pain sits ever closer to my heart.

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

## A DIRGE FOR HER BROTHER SAKHR

*by the Lady al-Khansa*

When night draws on, remembering keeps me wakeful
And hinders my rest with grief upon grief returning
For Sakhr. What a man was he on the day of battle,
When, snatching their chance, they swiftly exchange the spear-thrusts!

*It is recorded that the great poet Duraid passed one day by the tents of Sulaim, where he saw al-Khansa, who was the daughter of the chief. She was one of the most distinguished poets of Arabia, but at the moment she was anointing a sick camel of her father's with some pitch, and had removed most of her garments to be more at ease. Duraid, in spite of his seventy years, loved her, and asked for her in marriage. When her father told her of the request she answered,*

Ah, never of woe like this in the world of spirits
I heard, or of loss like mine in the heart of a woman.
What fortune might send, none stronger than he to bear it;
None better to meet the troubles with mind unshaken;
The kindest to help, wherever the need was sorest:
They all had of him a boon — wife, friend, and suitor.
O Sakhr! I will ne'er forget thee until in dying
I part from my soul, and earth for my tomb is cloven.
The rise of the sun recalls to me Sakhr my brother,
And him I remember also at every sunset.

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

## BURY ME NOT

### *by ash-Shanfara (sixth century* A.D.)

Bury me not! Me ye are forbidden to bury,
But thou, Ummu 'Amir,[1] soon wilt feast and make merry,
When foes bear away my head, wherein is the best of me,
And leave on the battle-field for thee all the rest of me.
Here nevermore I hope to live glad — a stranger
Accurst, whose wild deeds have brought his people in danger.

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

## IN PRAISE OF UMAIMAH

### *by ash-Shanfara*

Alas! Umaimah set firm her face to depart, and went:
gone is she, and when she sped, she left us with no farewell.
Her purpose was quickly shaped — no warning she gave her friends,

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*"Why should I leave my cousins, who are bright as spear-heads, and marry an old man who will be an owl to-morrow?" Duraid overheard her, and retired in anger. Later he wrote a poem on al-Khansa censuring her for her bad taste. She was urged to write a poem in answer, but she replied, "I have rejected him, that is enough. I will not satirize him also."*

[1] Ummu 'Amir, i.e., Mother of Amir, is a name given to the hyena.

though there she had dwelt hard by, her camels all day with ours.
Yea, thus in our eyes she dwelt, from morning to noon and eve —
she brought to an end her tale, and fleeted, and left us lone.
So gone is Umaimah, gone, and leaves here a heart in pain:
my life was to yearn for her, and now its delight is fled.

She won me whenas, shamefaced — no maid to let fall her veil,
no wanton to glance behind — she walked forth with steady tread;
Her eyes seek the ground, as though they looked for a thing lost there:
she turns not to left or right — her answer is brief and low.
She rises before day dawns to carry her supper forth
to wives who have need — dear alms, when such gifts are few enow!
Afar from the voice of blame her tent stands for all to see,
when many a woman's tent is pitched in the place of scorn.
No gossip to bring him shame from her does her husband dread
— when mention is made of women, pure and unstained is she.
The day done, at eve glad comes he home to his eyes' delight:
he needs not to ask of her — "Say, where didst thou pass the day?"
And slender is she where meet, and full where it so beseems,
and tall, straight, a fairy shape, if such upon earth there be.
And nightlong as we sat there, methought that the tent was roofed
above us with basil sprays, all fragrant in dewy eve —
Sweet basil from Halyah dale, its branches abloom and fresh,
that fills all the place with balm, no starveling of desert sands.

*Sir Charles Lyall*

## AFTER THE PLAGUE

*by a man of Khath'am (date unknown)*

Deep was the first draught, deep the next, no stint was there,
when time gulped down the great of al-Aswad and of 'Attab:
Yea, every hand that was quick to help and free to give
when the storm-gust whirled the wattled walls of the tribe away.
And to-day they wander, a trembling herd, their herdsman Death:
one speeds away to his rest at eve, one stays till dawn.

Still is the country, and I who should not have been am lord —
Ah, woeful lordship — alone to lead, no friend, no peer!

*Sir Charles Lyall*

*Rendered in the* Kamil, *the measure of the original.*

## HE THINKS OF HIS CHILDREN

### *by Hittan of Tayyi (date unknown)*

Fortune has brought me down — her wonted way —
from station great and high to low estate;
Fortune has rent away my plenteous store:
of all my wealth honor alone is left.
Fortune has turned my joy to tears: how oft
did fortune make me laugh with what she gave!
But for these girls, the kata's [1] downy brood,
unkindly thrust from door to door as hard —
Far would I roam and wide to seek my bread
in earth that has no lack of breadth and length.
Nay, but our children in our midst, what else
but our hearts are they, walking on the ground?
If but the breeze blow harsh on one of them
my eye says no to slumber all night long.

*Sir Charles Lyall*

## ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF HER BROTHER

### *by the Lady Safiya of Bahila (date unknown)*

Two boughs, the fairest ever tree possessed,
We sprang and mounted from the selfsame root,
Until men said, "Long are their shoots, and blest
Their shade and sweet the promise of their fruit."

But time, whose villainy will nothing spare,
Destroyed my dear one. He did us excel
As 'mongst the stars a moon more bright and fair,
And as a moon from forth our midst he fell.

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

[1] The sand-grouse, which is said to bring water in her crop for her young in the desert.

## NIGHT IN THE DESERT

*by Murakkish the Elder* (*sixth century* A.D.)

And many the echoing desert, full of dust, long untraversed by man,
through which the company of thirsting camels press at top
speed, while the riders sit drowsily on their backs,
Have I passed through, making from its unknown wastes to parts
known, mounted on a she-camel strong and bold, that goes along
deliberately, while about us is pitch-dark night.
Therein have I left behind a long length of the night, and a halting-
place where a fire was kindled which no one visited to take the
fire therefrom.
There mightst thou hear about us the cries of the owls, like the sound
of wooden clappers beaten in the stillness of night;
And the place where my camel's saddle was cast, where she rested
through the latter night, over it the creeping things of the dark-
ness had crept.

When we lighted the fire to roast our meat, there came to us a wolf,
ashen in color, in evil case;
I flung to him a slice of our roast, ashamed to send him empty away:
I like not discourtesy towards one with whom I sit at meat;
And he turned and went away with it, glad at heart, shaking his head,
as returns home with spoil a stout fighter steadfast in battle.

And the way-marks appeared at our sides as though the heads thereof
were the heads of mountains plunged in a great watery gulf:
When I left behind one cairn built to mark the way, there appeared
another, gray and dim in the midst of the sun-mist.

*Sir Charles Lyall*

## THE "GOLDEN ODE"

*by Labid* (*about* 570–662 A.D.)
(*also spelled Lebid, Lebeid, Labeed*)

*This ode, or* Kasida, *which is one of "The Seven Poems," is given in its entirety to show the construction of the Arabian classic ode. The comments are by the editor, in order to make more clear the curious sequence of ideas which the form imposed.*

The poet visits the deserted camping-ground.

Gone are they, the lost camps, light flittings, long sojournings
in Mina, in Ghaula, Rijam left how desolate.
Lost are they. Rayyan lies lorn with its white torrent beds,
scored in lines like writings left by the flood water.
Tent-floors smooth, forsaken, bare of all that dwelt in them,
years how long, the war-months, months too of peace-pleasures.
Spots made sweet with spring rains fresh-spilled from the Zodiac,
showers from clouds down-shaken, wind-wracks and thunder-clouds;
Clouds how wild of night time, clouds of the dawn darkening,
clouds of the red sunset—all speak the name of her.

Here, in green thorn-thickets, does bring forth how fearlessly;
here the ostrich-troops come, here too the antelopes.
Wild cows, with their wild calf-sucklings, standing over them,
while their weanlings wander wide in the bare valleys.
Clean-swept lie their hearth-stones, white as a new manuscript
writ with texts fresh-graven, penned by the cataracts,
Scored with lines and circles, limned with rings and blazonings,
as one paints a maid's cheek point-lined in indigo.
All amazed I stood there. How should I make questionings?
Dumb the rocks around me, silent the precipice,

Voices lost, where these dwelt who at dawn abandoning
tent and thorn-bush fencing fled to the wilderness.
Now thy sad heart acheth, grieveth loud remembering
girls how closely howdahed, awned with what canopies.
Every howdah curtained, lined with gauze embroideries,
figured with festoons hung red from the pole of it.
Trooped they there the maid-folk, wild white cows of Tudiha,
ay, or does of Wujra, long-necked, their fawns with them,
Fled as the mirage flees, fills the vale of Bishata,
fills the tree-clad wadies, in the land rock-mazes.

He tells of his love.

What of her, Nowara, thy lost love, who fled from thee,
every heart-link sundered, close loop and free fetter!
Hers the Morra camp-fires lit how far in Faida,
in Hejaz what marches! How shalt thou win to her?
Eastward move thy marching, to Muhajjer wandering
camped in Tai, in Ferda, ay, in Rukham of it.
Southward on to Yemen, to Soweyk their sojournings,
to Wahaf el Kahri, ay and Tilkham of it.
Man, have done! forget her, one too far to comfort thee!
Who would his love garner first let him sunder it.
Shed the love that fails thee. Strong be thou, and break with her.

Keep thy gifts for friendship, freed from thy wilderment.

Mount thee on thy naga.[1] Travel-trained and hard she is,
low her back with leanness, lessened the hump of her;

He flees on a swift beast, whose virtues he praises.

Shrunk her sides and wasted, jaded with long journeyings,
spare as her hide shoe-straps frayed by her road-faring.
Light she to her halter, to thy hand that guideth her,
as a red cloud southwards loosed from its rain-burden.
Nay, a fair wild-ass she; at her side the white-flanked one,
he the scarred ass-stallion, bitten and struck for her.
Climbed they two the hilltop, he the bite-scarred ass-tyrant
her new mood resenting, being in foal to him,
On the crags high posted watcheth he from Thala-but
all the plain to guard her, ambushes laid for her.
Six months of Jumada wandered have they waterless,
browsing the moist herbage, he her high sentinel.
Till returned their thirsting, need of the far water clefts,
all their will to win there speeding them waterwards.
What though with heels wounded, still the hot wind driveth them,
as a furnace burning, fire-scorched the breath of it.

[1] Usually translated camel

In their trail a dust-cloud, like a smoke it wavereth,
like a fire new-lighted, kindling the flame of it,
Flame fanned by the north-wind, green wood mixed with dry fuel,
smoke aloft high curling. So is the dust of them.
He, when her pace slackened, pushed her still in front of him.
Nay, she might not falter, tyrant he urged her on,
Till they reached the streamlet, plunged and slaked their thirst in it,
a spring welling over, crest-high the reeds of it;
All its banks a cane-brake, thick with stems o'ershadowing;
bent are some, some standing, night-deep the shade of them.

Say is this her likeness? Or a wild cow wolf-raided
of her sweet calf loitering, she in the van of them.
She, the short-nosed, missed it. Lows she now unendingly,
roams the rocks, the sand-drifts, mourning and bellowing,
Lows in rage beholding that white shape, the limbs of it,
dragged by the gray wolf-cubs: who shall their hunger stay?
Theirs the chance to seize it, hers the short forgetfulness.
Death is no mean archer. Mark how his arrows hit.
Stopped she then at night-fall, while the rain in long furrows

scored the bush-grown hill-slopes, ceaseless the drip of it,
Dripped on her dark back-line, poured abroad abundantly:
not a star the heaven showed, cloud-hung the pall of it;
One tree all her shelter, standing broad-branched, separate
at the sand-hills' edge-line, steep-set the sides of them.
She, the white cow, shone there through the dark night luminous,
like a pearl of deep-seas, freed from the string of it.

Thus till morn, till day-dawn folded back night's canopy;
then she fled bewildered, sliding the feet of her,
Fled through the rain lakelets, to the pool Suwayada,
all a seven nights' fasting twinned with the days of them,
Till despaired she wholly, till her udder milk-stricken
shrank, so full to feed him suckling or weaning him.
Voices now she hears near, human tones, they startle her,
though to her eye naught is: Man! he, the bane of her!
Seeketh a safe issue, the forenoon through listening,
now in front, behind now, fearing her enemy.
And they failed, the archers. Loosed they then to deal with her
fine-trained hounds, the lop-eared, slender the sides of them.

These outran her lightly. Turned she swift her horns on them,
like twin spears of Samhar, sharp-set the points of them.
Well she knew her danger, knew if her fence failed with them
hers must be the red death. Hence her wrath's strategy.
And she slew Kasabi, foremost hound of all of them,
stretched the brach in blood there, ay, and Sukham of them.

Thus is she, my naga. When at noon the plains quiver
and the hills dance sun-steeped, cloaked in the heat-tremors,
Ride I and my deeds do, nor forbear from wantoning,
lest the fools should shame me, blame me the fault-finders.

He comes at last to the gist of his poem, in this case a panegyric on himself.

Do not thou misprise me, thou Nowara. One am I
binder of all love-knots, ay, and love's sunderer;
One who when love fails him, wails not long but flies from it;
one whom one alone holds, hard death the hinderer.
What dost thou of mirth know, glorious nights, ah, how many:
cold nor heat might mar them, spent in good company?
Came I thus discoursing to his sign, the wine-seller's,
drank at the flag-hoisting, drank till the wine grew dear,
Bidding up each full skin: black with age the brand of it,
pouring forth the tarred jars, breaking the seals of them;

Pure deep draughts of morning, while she played, the sweet singer
fingering the lute-strings, showing her skill to me.
Ere the cock had crowed once a first cup was quaffed by me:
ere slow man had stretched him, gone was the second cup.
On what dawns sharp-winded clothed have I the cold with it,
dawns that held the north-wind reined in the hands of them.

Well have I my tribe served, brought them aid and armament,
slept, my mare's reins round me, night-long their sentinel;
Ridden forth at day-dawn, climbed the high-heaped sand-ridges
hard by the foe's marches, dun-red the slopes of them;
Watched till the red sun dipped hand-like in obscurity,
till the night lay curtained, shrouding our weaknesses;
And I came down riding, my mare's neck held loftily
as a palm fruit-laden: woe to the gatherer!
Swift was she, an ostrich; galloped she how wrathfully,
from her side the sweat streamed, lightening the ribs of her;
Strained on her her saddle; dripped with wet the neck of her,
the white foam-flakes wreathing, edging the girth of her;
Thrusteth her neck forward, shaketh her reins galloping;
flieth as the doves fly bound for the water-springs.

At the king's court strangers thronged from what far provinces,
each athirst for bounty, fearing indignity.
Stiff-necked they as lions in their hate, the pride of them,
came with stubborn proud feet, Jinns of the wilderness.
Stopped I their vain boastings, took no ill-tongued words from them,
let them not take license. What were their chiefs to me?
I it was provided camels for their slaughtering,
I who their shares portioned, drawing the lots for them.
Every mouth I feasted. Barren mount and milch-camel
slew I for all daily. All shared the meat of them.
Far guest and near neighbor, every man rose satisfied,
full as in Tebala, fed as in green valleys.
Ay, the poor my tent filled, thin poor souls like sick camels,
nagas at a tomb tied, bare-backed, no shirt on them.
Loud the winter winds howled; piled we high the meat-dishes;
flowed the streams of fatness, feeding the fatherless.
Thus the tribes were trysted; nor failed we the provident
to name one, a wise man, fair-tongued, as judge for them,
One who the spoil portioned, gave to each his just measure,
spake to all unfearing, gave or refused to give,
A just judge, a tribe-sheykh, wise, fair-worded, bountiful,
sweet of face to all men, feared by the warriors.

And on his tribe.

Noble we; our fathers wielded power bequeathed to them,
dealt law to the nations, each tribe its law-giver.
All our lineage faultless, no light words our promises;
not for us the vain thoughts, passions of common men.
Thou fool foe, take warning, whatso the Lord portioneth
hold it a gift granted, dealt thee in equity.
Loyalty our gift was, faith unstained our heritage;
these fair things He gave us, He the distributor.
For us a mansion built he, brave the height of it,
lodged therein our old men, ay, and the youths of us,
All that bore our burdens, all in our tribe's sore sorrow,
all that were our horsemen, all our high councillors.
Like the spring are these men, joy to them that wait on them,
to the weak, the widows, towers in adversity.
Thus our kin stands faith-firm, purged of tribe-malingerers.
Woe be to all false friends! Woe to the envious!

*Wilfred Scawen Blunt*
*after Lady Ann Blunt*

## ELEGY

### *by Labid*

O Maiya, arise amidst the keeners and wail for him
That built for himself renown, a man that was loved and feared!
And cry unto God, " Oh, take not Arbad afar from us,"
And shatter thy grief-riven heart with mention of his dear name.
A stout pillar to his folk: they leaned on him: then came doom,
And one day they marked for him a place in the earth to lie.

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

# POETS AFTER MOHAMMED

## THE BEDOUINE SCORNS HER HUSBAND THE CALIPH

*by the Lady Maisun* (*about* 650 A.D.)

A tent with rustling breezes cool
Delights me more than palace high,
And more the cloak of simple wool
Than robes in which I learned to sigh.

The crust I ate beside my tent
Was more than this fine bread to me;
The wind's voice where the hill-path went
Was more than tambourine can be.

And more than purr of friendly cat
I love the watch-dog's bark to hear;
And more than any lubbard fat
I love a Bedouin cavalier!

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

## VERSES TO HIS FATHER MU'AWIYA, WHO REPROACHED HIM FOR DRUNKENNESS

*by the Caliph Yezid*

(*succeeded to the Caliphat* 680 A.D.)

Must then my failings from the shaft
Of anger ne'er escape?
And dost thou storm because I've quaffed
The water of the grape?

That I can thus from wine be driven
Thou surely ne'er canst think —
Another reason thou hast given
Why I resolve to drink.

'Twas sweet the flowing cup to seize,
'Tis sweet thy rage to see;
And first I drink myself to please;
And next — to anger thee.

*J. D. Carlyle*

*Mu'awiya was the Caliph to whom the Lady Maisun referred as a "lubbard fat" in the poem last given, and Yezid, the author of these verses, was her son. History is kinder to Mu'awiya than the lady was, for he seems to have been a wise ruler, whereas his son was a confirmed debauche and something of a degenerate.*

## STUNG BY A SERPENT, HE WRITES HIS OWN ELEGY

*by Malik of Tamim (about 676 A.D.)*

I thought who would weep for me, and none did I find to mourn
but only my sword, my spear, the best of Rudainah's store,
And one friend, a sorrel steed, who goes forth with trailing rein
to drink at the pool, since death has left none to draw for him.

*Sir Charles Lyall*

## TO HIS OWN SOUL

*by Katari of Mazin (died 697 A.D.)*

I said to her when she fled in amaze and breathless
before the array of battle — Why dost thou tremble?
Yea, if but a day of life thou shouldst beg with weeping
beyond what thy doom appoints, thou wouldst not gain it.
Be still then, and face the onset of death, high-hearted,
for none upon earth shall win to abide forever.
No raiment of praise the cloak of old age and weakness:
none such for the coward who bows like a reed in tempest.

The pathway of death is set for all men to travel:
the crier of death proclaims through the earth his empire.
Who dies not when young and sound dies old and weary,
cut off in his length of days from all love and kindness;
And what for a man is left of delight in living,
past use, flung away, a worthless and worn-out chattel?

*Sir Charles Lyall*

## IN PRAISE OF HIS MARE

*by Yazid, called Muzarrid*
(*seventh century* A.D.)

And I have for use, what time war, stirred up again and again, becomes pregnant with mischief, and desperate affairs manifest their beginnings,

* * *

. . . . a mare long of body, short of hair, whose spirit is unfailing, compactly and firmly built, slender as a staff, that has borne no foal,

A bay, with her back strongly knit: as-Sarih and Jafil, her sires, have lifted her line to the best of strains.

She is one of those steeds of race that stretch themselves fully in their gallop, springing and light of foot, pressing on in her eagerness: her longing is the far-extending desert, plain giving into plain.

She turns her cheeks briskly to right and left, though her gallop has lasted long, as an adversary vehement in his contention casts his hands this way and that.

Her noble endurance, and her impetuosity in which is no flagging, carry her to the front of the dash of the galloping steeds;

And if that which was withheld of the reins is restored to her, she lets herself go at full speed like the darting flight of a sand-grouse which hawks pursue.

A mare kept always close to the tent, never has she been bestridden except for a foray, nor have ever foals tugged at her teats.

When she has been fined down by training, she is like a young gazelle fed on *hullab*, with her muscles and upper parts firmly knit, and her lower limbs made nimble and light.

And in truth she has ever been to me a precious possession, born and brought up in our tents: of all possessions that which has been born and bred with one's people is the most precious;
And I will keep her as my own so long as there is a presser for the olive, and so long as a man, barefoot or shod, wanders on the face of the earth.

*Sir Charles Lyall*

## HE PRAISES HIS ORCHARD

*by al-Marrar of Tamim*
(*seventh century* A.D.)

How many a man of evil nature dost thou see, who sticks fast to his troop of camels, red and black!
He is niggardly with the due he should pay from them, and reaps blame therefrom: and yet he must fain leave them to others when he dies.
And sooth, if thou seest camels in the hands of others, while of us thou seest not one milch-camel —
Lo, we have in place of them fenced orchards of palm-trees, flourishing, the gift of God the Lord of all creatures.

They seek the great store of water below with their roots, so that they drink of its plenty till they are satisfied.
They vie in tallness with the two precipitous sides of Ushayy which face them: they bear abundantly, and care not at all for years of drought.
Their topmost heads of foliage waving in every wind are like girls that pull at one another's hair.
They are pets of fortune, and have no fear of drought: when a troop of grazing camels dies of starvation, they endure unscathed.
When the years are deadly with drought and famine, they shoot higher, and become not lean under stress of rainless days.
The daughters of their daughters, while the daughters of others are gasping with thirst, are never thirsty, but always fully satisfied with their drinking.

The guest travels, then halts under them in a halting-place of honor,
until the time comes for him to go his way.
This, then, is our wealth, and the reward of it remains to us: so re-
mit somewhat of thy blame of us, O Lady.

*Sir Charles Lyall*

## LINES

### *by Muzahim al-Ukaili* (*about* 700 A.D.)

Then I turned aside with them on a waste which the wind was lash-
ing with drifting fine sand.
As if its flint-stones through the length of time which they had been
lying there were hard on the top, motionless, never moving;
And dust was there gray like the body of doves, which the wind of
Tarj and the east wind swept away in every direction.
Its abodes through the length of decay almost seem to say to those
who ask them about their inhabitants: " Do not trouble! "

*F. Krenkow*

## FRAGMENT

### *by Muzahim al-Ukaili*

. . . . A brown sandgrouse whom a burning day and summer-wind
had caused to long for water.
She started firm like a date-stone to bring water to downy young ones
in a waterless desert who have no other friend if she does not
return.
Lying among small hillocks, their backs resemble the withered re-
mains of plants of a preceding year.
When the wind faces her the sandgrouse flies steadily rising, but if
the wind strikes her in the back she glides along quickly.
She moves her shoulders quickly, thrusting her chest forward, out-
stripping the leading birds.
With a body firm as the spice-box of a woman of Hajar which en-
closes the perfume of Persian aloe-wood.
She comes into sight slantways, and neither in her nor in her flapping
wing-feathers is any shirking.

On account of the first signs of night, when already the dark cover of its shade fell, the young were taking shelter in the branches of the Idah bushes.
A bird in a hurry called to them and they answered her voice, and they were lying like polo-balls in a hollow.
They raise themselves when they hear it, taking short steps, having no bodies of any size.
They chatter to their mother with short nape of head and thin legs, calling "Kata," an ancient way of talking they have.
Then they spend the night with glad eyes, for they have received a lasting drink of water.

*F. Krenkow*

## O MY TWO FRIENDS

*by al-Kuhaif al-Ukaili (about 748 A.D.)*

O my two friends! What endurance I have over sighs and what power over grief and tears!
My soul drops every day and night upon the trace of sorrows which had already escaped her.

*F. Krenkow*

## BRAGGING SONG

*by al-Kuhaif al-Ukaili*

If you killed a patient martyr from among us
We have left of yours slaughtered
Twenty, who have not yet been put into graves;
Slain ones, who were instantly killed and slaughtered,
And are now slow in moving; you see their legs sprawling.

*F. Krenkow*

## FRAGMENT OF A POEM

*by Abu'l-Atahiya (748–828 A.D.)*

Get sons for death, build houses for decay!
All, all, ye wend annihilation's way.
For whom build we, who must ourselves return

Into our native element of clay?
O Death, nor violence nor flattery thou
Dost use; but when thou comest, escape none may.
Methinks, thou art ready to surprise mine age,
As age surprised and made my youth its prey.
What ails me, World, that every place perforce
I lodge me in, it galleth me to stay?
And O Time, how do I behold thee run
To spoil me? Thine own gift thou takest away!
O Time! inconstant, mutable art thou,
And o'er the realm of ruin is thy sway.
What ails me that no glad result it brings
Whene'er, O World, to milk thee I essay?
And when I court thee, why dost thou raise up
On all sides only trouble and dismay?
Men seek thee every wise, but thou art like
A dream; the shadow of a cloud; the day
Which hath but now departed, nevermore
To dawn again: a glittering vapor gay.
This people thou hast paid in full: their feet
Are on the stirrup — let them not delay!
But those that do good works and labor well
Hereafter shall receive the promised pay.

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

## ON THE BURIAL OF HIS SON

*by Abu'l-Atahiya*

Full is my sorrow now that you are dead,
And I have thrown the dust upon your head.
In other days I preached unendingly,
But now, my little boy, you preach to me.

*Henry Baerlein*

## THE FRIEND OF THE CALIPH HARUN AL-RASHID SPEAKS

*by Abu Nuwas* (756–810 A.D.)

I

O Malik! I pray thee go for the wine full early,
And if it be dear to buy, then buy it dearly!

Bethink thee how once a grizzled old tavern-keeper,
Whose whiskers were black with blowing the tarry wine-skin,
I called, as he lay where slumber had stolen o'er him —
His head sunk low, the left hand's palm his pillow;
And he at my cry arose with a start of terror,
And hastened to light the wick, and it flared, and straightway
His terror was flown: he had gotten a look of gladness
And gaily ha-ha'd — a clatter of idle laughter.
When now by the flame my features were lit, he gave me
The greeting of love, asked many a courteous question;
And into his hand I counted a thousand dirhems
To lodge me a month, with freedom for either party.
I found in his pleasure-domes two noble virgins
Of family high and proud, and became their bridegroom.

'Tis thus I have ever lived and am living ever,
Away my religion goes, and my wealth in armfuls.
As oft as we meet, I like what the law forbiddeth,
And never can bear to like what the law hath allowed.

II

Youth and I, we ran a headlong race of pleasure,
No recorded sin but soon I took its measure.
Of the gifts of time there's none to heaven nigher
Than when music wakes the string of lute and lyre.
O the girl whose song — I had it for the asking —

*Abu Nuwas, who lived at the court of Harun al-Rashid, was the most famous poet of revelry.*

Oft at Dhi Tuluh rose where our tents were basking!
Make the most of youth, it stayeth not forever;
Let the wine flow round from eve to morn — one river!
Pour into thy cup a sparkling ruddy vintage
That will melt to ruth the miser's hardest mintage,
Sought and chosen out of old for Persia's ruler,
Dowered with twin delights of fragrancy and color.
Seest thou not that I have pawned my soul for liquor,
Kissed the mouth of fair gazelle and foaming beaker?
'Tis because I know, full well I know and fear it,
Far apart shall be my body and my spirit.

3

(*A song of scorn for the old ways of the poets of Arabia*)

The lovelorn wretch stopped at a deserted camping-ground to question it, and I stopped to enquire after the local tavern.
May Allah not dry the eyes of him that wept over stones, and may He not ease the pain of him that yearns to a tent-peg!
They said, "Didst thou commemorate the dwelling-places of the Tribe of Asad?" Plague on thee! tell me, who are the Banu Asad?
And who are Tamim and Kais and their kinsfolk? In the sight of Allah the Bedouins are nobody!
Leave this — may I lack thy company! — and drink old yellow wine, coursing between the water and the froth,[1]
From the hand of a boy with the girdle on his slender waist. . . .

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

## FROM THE "ROMANCE OF ANTAR" . .

*attributed to al-Asma'ee* (*eighth century* A.D.)

The lovely virgin has struck my heart with the arrow of a glance, for which there is no cure.

[1] Arab wine was so strong that it was mixed with water before drinking.

Sometimes she wishes for a feast in the sand-hills, like a fawn whose eyes are full of magic.
My disease preys on me; it is in my entrails: I conceal it; but its very concealment discloses it.
She moves: I should say it was the branch of the tamarisk that waves its branches to the southern breeze.
She approaches: I should say it was the frightened fawn, when a calamity alarms it in the waste.
She walks away: I should say her face was truly the sun when its luster dazzles the beholders.
She gazes: I should say it was the full moon of the night when Orion girds it with stars.
She smiles: and the pearls of her teeth sparkle, in which there is the cure for the sickness of lovers.
She prostrates herself in reverence towards her God; and the greatest of men bow down to her beauties.
O Abla! when I most despair, love for thee and all its weaknesses are my only hope!

*Terrick Hamilton*

*The* Romance of Antar *is an "apocryphal" romance, much scorned by the Arab scholars, but loved by the common people. In it are gathered all the tales of adventure and high romance which had been handed down from the "Days of Ignorance," and all attributed to the great pre-Islamic poet Antarah. The story of his death is one of the most dramatic in literature.*

## THREE WAYS OF LOVE

*by an Unknown Author*

Three be the ways of love: a knitting of heart to heart;
a pleasing of lips and eyes; a third love whose name is death.

*Sir Charles Lyall*

## ELEGY

*by Ishak son of Khalaf* (*about* 826 A.D.)

Gone is Umaimah to dwell where tall stones tell of the dead
— poor waif at rest in the grave, laid safe at last in the dust.
O thou — one half of my soul! how mourns the half that is left,
athirst for thee, though the tears stream fast and full from my eyes!
Ah me! for her did I fear, lest I should go to my grave
the first, and leave her alone, unveiled, to battle with want:
But now I sleep, and no care comes nigh to trouble my rest:
at last finds jealousy peace, when all it guarded are dead!
This is the kindness of death — shall I deny him his due? —
peace has he brought me, if pain be still the chief of his gifts.

*Sir Charles Lyall*

*Rendered in the* Basit, *the measure of the original.*

## ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE

*by Muwailik al-Mazmum* (*about* 835 A.D.)

Take thou thy way by the grave wherein thy dear one lies
— Umm-al-'Ala, — and lift up thy voice: ah, if she could hear!
How art thou come — for very fearful wast thou — to dwell
in a land where not the most valiant goes but with quaking heart?
God's love be thine and his mercy, O thou dear lost one!
not meet for thee is the place of shadow and loneliness.
And a little one hast thou left behind — God's ruth on her!
She knows not what to bewail thee means, yet weeps for thee;
For she misses those sweet ways of thine that thou hadst with her,
and the long night wails, and we strive to hush her to sleep in vain.
When her crying smites in the night upon my sleepless ears,
straightway my eyes brimful are filled from the well of tears.

*Sir Charles Lyall*

## ON A VALETUDINARIAN

*by Ibn al-Rumi, a Syrian Arab (died 894 A.D.)*

So careful is Isa, and anxious to last
So afraid of himself is he grown,
He swears thro' two nostrils the breath goes too fast,
And he's trying to breathe thro' but one!

*J. D. Carlyle*

## HE DEFENDS HIMSELF

*by Ibn al-Rumi*

Think otherwise of me, for it is wrong
To scowl because my praises are so long.
As there lay very little in the well,
I could not use a shorter rope of song.

*Henry Baerlein*

## NIGHT

*by Ibn al-Motazz, son of the Caliph*
*(died 908 A.D.)*

Our old moon put her horns away and the dark nights were three;
There danced a girl-moon through the clouds, pallid as ivory.
At break of day went Jupiter patrolling down the sky,
Just as the lonely watchman with a lantern passing by.

*Henry Baerlein*

## AN ANSWER TO ONE WHO ASKED HIS TRADE

*by Ahmed Ibn al-Chajjath*

Alas, I have no wares to sell —
Look at my rags!
It is but honor that I bring,
And who would buy so grave a thing?

*Henry Baerlein*

## TO LEILA, UPON SEEING HER BLUSH

*by the Caliph Radhi Billah (died* 941 A.D.)

Leila, whene'er I gaze on thee
My altered cheek turns pale,
While upon thine, sweet maid, I see
A deepening blush prevail.

Leila, shall I the cause impart
Why such a change takes place?
The crimson stream deserts my heart,
To mantle on thy face.

*J. D. Carlyle*

## THREE POEMS

*by Mutanabbi, the Syrian Arab* (905–965 A.D.)

1

Shame hitherto was wont my tears to stay,
But now by shame they will no more be stayed,
So that each bone seems through its skin to sob,
And every vein to swell the sad cascade.
Her beauty could dismay the young gazelle:
No wonder stricken me it hath dismayed.

She uncovered: pallor veiled her at farewell:
No veil 'twas, yet her cheeks it cast in shade;
So seemed they, while tears trickled over them,
Gold with a double row of pearls inlaid.
She loosed three sable tresses of her hair,
And thus of night four nights at once she made;
But when she lifted to the moon in heaven
Her face, two moons together I surveyed.

2

Naught kills the noble like forgiveness—yet
Where are the noble who no boon forget?

Kindness subdues the man of generous race,
But only makes more insolent the base.
As ill doth bounty in sword's place accord
With honor, as in bounty's place the sword.

3

That which souls desire is too small a thing for them to fight about and perish by each other's hands,
Howbeit a true man will face grim fate ere he suffer contumely.
If the life of aught that lives were lasting, we should reckon the brave the most misguided of us,
But if there is no escape from death, 'tis but weakness to be a coward.
All that the soul finds hard before it has come to pass is easy when it comes.

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

## COUPLET
### *by Mutanabbi*

Strive always for the highest, you will gain the highest seat,
And have the half-moon's silver for the covering of your feet.

*Henry Baerlein*

*Mutanabbi, who passed his life at the court in Aleppo, is praised by all scholars, Arab and European alike, as one of the greatest of the Arabic poets. Yet he is seldom translated. "In translation," says Reynold Nicholson, "his great qualities are overshadowed by others less pleasing to our taste."*

## POEMS

### *by Abu'l-Ala, the Syrian Arab*

(973–1058 A.D.)

1

They robed the Christian's daughter;
From high embowered room
In dusky robe they brought her
Down, down into a tomb —
And oh, her dress had often been
Gay as a peacock's plume.

2

Aweary am I of living in town and village —
And oh, to be camped alone in a desert region,
Revived by the scent of lavender when I hunger
And scooping into my palm, if I thirst, well-water!
Meseemeth, the days are dromedaries lean and jaded
That bear on their backs humanity traveling onward;
They shrink not in dread from any portentous nightmare,
Nor quail at the noise of shouting and rush of panic,
But journey along forever with those they carry,
Until at the last they kneel by the dug-out houses.
No need, when in earth the maid rests, covered over,
No need for her locks of hair to be loosed and plaited;
The young man parts from her, and his tears are flowing —
Even thus do the favors flow of disgustful fortune.

*Rendered in the* Wafir, *the metre of the original.*

*Abu'l-Ala of Ma'arri was a famous ascetic and freethinker. At the age of four an attack of small-pox left him practically blind and much disfigured, which may account for his pessimistic turn of mind. None the less, because of his extraordinary power of memory he became a great scholar. After a short visit to Baghdad he returned to his native village of Ma'arri, where he lived in retirement to a great age.*

3

The world's abounding filth is shot
O'er all its creatures, all its kinds;
The evil taint even she hath got
Whose loom for her a living finds.
Be just and live on earth what can?
And none is more unjust than man.

4

Falsehood hath so corrupted all the world,
Ne'er deal as true friends they whom sects divide;
But were not hate man's natural element,
Churches and mosques had risen side by side.

5

Stay at home! No obligation
I account the Pilgrimage,
Lady, on thy sex in virgin
Youth nor yet in wedded age.

Mecca's valley breeds the worst of
Miscreants, who never feel
Fierceness to defend the weaker,
Never flame with knightly zeal.

Men of Shaiba, temple-guardians,
Standing there bemused with wine,
Shove the pilgrim-folk in couples
Through the gateway of the Shrine.

When the people throng around it,
Leave to enter they refuse
None that slips a piece of silver —
Christians jostle in with Jews.

Lady, canst thou do a kindness?
Bless, then, having power to bless,
And if charity invite thee
To a good act, answer " Yes! "

6

* * *

I clean renounce the fool whose hidden track
And open prove him still to error sworn,
Who bans the prayer of afternoon with scorn
And casts the prayer of noon behind his back.

Give the poor man who comes to thee a dole,
Scant though it be, nor frown away thy guest,
But raise for him a flame of ruddy crest
That frolics in the darkness like a foal!

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

## FROM THE "LAZUMIYAT"

*by Abu'l-Ala*

The secret of the day and night is in
The constellations, which forever spin
Around each other in the comet-dust —
The comet-dust and humankind are kin.

But whether of dust or fire or foam, the glaive
Of Allah cleaves the planet and the wave
Of this mysterious Heaven-Sea of life,
And lo! we have the Cradle of the Grave.

The Grave and Cradle, the untiring twain,
Who in the markets of this narrow lane
Bordered of darkness, ever give and take
In equal measure — what's the loss or gain?

Ay, like the circles which the sun doth spin
Of gossamer, we end as we begin;
Our feet are on the heads of those that pass,
But ever their graves around our Cradles grin.

Or sleep — and shall it be eternal sleep
Somewhither in the bosom of the deep
Infinities of cosmic dust, or here
Where gracile cypresses the vigil keep?

Upon the threshing-floor of life I burn
Beside the Winnower a word to learn;
And only this: Man's of the soil and sun
And to the soil and sun he shall return.

And like a spider's house or sparrow's nest,
The Sultan's palace, though upon the crest
Of glory's mountain, soon or late must go:
Every abode to ruin is addrest.

So too the creeds of man: the one prevails
Until the other comes; and this one fails
When that one triumphs; ay, the lonesome world
Will always want the latest fairy-tales.

How like a door the knowledge we attain,
Which door is on the bourne of the Inane;
It opens and our nothingness is closed —
It closes and in darkness we remain.

Hither we come unknowing, hence we go;
Unknowing we are messaged to and fro;
And yet we think we know all things of earth
And sky — the sun and stars we think we know.

I heard it whispered in the cryptic streets
Where every sage the same dumb shadow meets:
"We are but words fallen from the lips of time
Which God, that we might understand, repeats."

Another said: "The creeping worm hath shown
In her discourse on human flesh and bone
That man was once the bed on which she slept —
The walking dust was once a thing of stone."

And still another: " We are coins which fade
In circulation, coins which Allah made
To cheat Iblis: the good and bad alike
Are spent by Fate upon a passing shade."

The Earth then spake: " My children silent be;
The same to God the camel and the flea:
He makes a mess of me to nourish you,
Then makes a mess of you to nourish me."

Now, mosques and churches — even a Kaaba Stone,
Korans and Bibles — even a martyr's bone —
All these and more my heart can tolerate,
For my religion's Love, and love alone.

To humankind, O Brother, consecrate
Thy heart, and shun the hundred sects that prate
About the things they little know about —
Let all receive thy pity, not thy hate.

*Ameen Rihani*

*It is interesting to compare the poetry of Abu'l-Ala with the later Persian poetry of revolt, to which Omar Khayyam's* Rubaiyat *belong, and to remember that every educated Persian knew something of Arabic at that time.*

## FROM THE DIWAN[1]

### *Of Abu'l-Ala*

Man has been thought superior to the swarm
Of ruminating cows, of witless foals
Who, crouching when the voice of thunder rolls,
Are banqueted upon a thunderstorm.

But shall the fearing eyes of humankind
Have peeped behind the curtain and excel
The boldness of a wondering gazelle
Or of a bird imprisoned in the wind?

[1] A diwan is a collection of lyrics arranged alphabetically.

Ah! never may we hope to win release
Before we that unripeness overthrow —
So must the corn in agitation grow
Before the sickle sings the song of peace.

*Henry Baerlein*

## FROM "THE DECEPTION OF OUTWARD APPEARANCE"

### *by Abu'l-Ala*

*There may be some doubt about the authorship of this poem — attributed by the translator to Abu'l-Ala — since it is so far out of key with his other work. But there can be no doubt about the quaintness of this translation, which was published in* 1765 *and clearly shows the change in our own literary fashion during the last* 150 *years.*

Wilt thou preſume to form thy judgment right
Of Camels' ſtrength from their impetuous ſteps?
Or is the duſky Night a proper time
To ſeparate what's falſe from genuine coin?

By violent avaritious paſſion mov'd,
Art thou deſirous of the melted Ore;
When the Sun's vapour falls on ſcorching ſands,
Preſenting gold and ſilver to thy view?

By the Divine permiſſion do thy thoughts
In Error's maze recount thy former years?
But to old camels art thou well compar'd;
Glad to reſemble thoſe of tender age.

* * *

Thus the ſmall Offspring of rebellious fires,
To th' Orphan ſtate are totally reduc'd;
When Calves [1] that traverſe thro' the woods are ſafe,
And the young Goats from danger are ſecure.

[1] Calves, &c. By theſe the Poet intimates young Virgins; becauſe ſuch animals are remarkable for ſparkling eyes, ſymmetry and proportion of body, and avoid being looked upon. (Translator's note.)

Let Kings and Princes their diverſion take!
The ſwifteſt Hares and Foxes be their prey!
But as a valiant Horſe-man in the field,
Fear not the braveſt Heroes to perſue.

Such as can boaſt of generous deſcent,
Scorn to deſtroy the beauteous female Herd.
Their principal Delight is to contend
With formidable Armies, great and ſmall.

When theſe in battle fall a ſacrifice,
The modeſt Nymphs inſtead of uſual veil,
Appear in public view, without regard
To thoſe who died by paſſion unreſtrain'd.

But tho' precarious is the warrior's fate,
Yet ſtill his bravery we muſt admire;
No toil, no dangerous fatigue he ſhuns;
And forms his horſes for the ſame exploits.

* * *

Inſtruct the warrior, when his horſes march
To an engagement with the enemy;
And one amongſt his troop in narrow ways
Is ſo embarraſs'd, that he can't retreat.

Tell him, an horſe of noble, gen'rous breed,
Hardſhips, and cruelty, does not deſerve.
But yet with ſuch an one mildneſs is vain;
For in full ſpeed he'll haſten to the field.

His preſence ſuch, that ev'ry lock of hair
In beauteous female's head, with ardent wiſh
Deſires it could in wreaths and plaits be made
So ſtrong, as fetters to command his feet.

So lovely, ſo admired, that even gold,
A metal of ſuch metal and eſteem,
For common iron would be glad to change,
And take the form of ſhoes to guard his ſoles.

*Leonard Chappelow,*
from the Latin of *Jacob Golius*

## FIVE POEMS

### *by Mu'tamid, King of Seville, the Spanish Arab*

(1069–1091 A.D.)

1

THE FOUNTAIN

The sea hath tempered it; the mighty sun
Polished the blade,
And from the limpid sheath the sword leaps forth;
Man hath not made
A better in Damascus — though for slaughter
Hath steel somewhat advantage over water.

2

A LETTER

Fain would I write to thee, and great display
Of reed and scroll have I — and naught to say
But that my heart is hotter than noonday.

*The life of Mu'tamid began with the pomp of royalty, yet poetry was always his refuge. His three wives were all poets. His favorite indeed he met through its practice. One evening he was walking in disguise with his vizier in the "Silver Fields" where the people took their pleasure. The water was stirred by a light wind, and glinted like a coat of mail in the late sunlight. Mu'tamid, struck by the sight, improvised the following,*

*Behold a breastplate welded by the breeze,*

*and looked to his vizier to complete the couplet, in the fashion of improvisation of the day. But before the vizier could reply a woman's voice spoke at his elbow,*

*And fitted for the warrior, would it freeze.*

*The speaker proved to be a slave-girl, called Rumaika. Mu'tamid was so struck that he had the girl taken at once to his harem and ultimately married her. She stayed with him to the end, after Spain had fallen to the Berbers who swept over from the Sahara, and shared his exile in Morocco, where he died.*

Belovéd, while the poor reed halts and lingers,
Tracing strange patterns in my heedless fingers,
The long, slow tears
Make bold to write upon my telltale cheek
In a clear hand the things I dare not speak.

* * *

3

HOPE STILL, MY HEART

Hope still, my heart, and cavil not at sorrow;
Grief and disaster
Are but the moonless seasons of the year,
And day comes faster
Because the night was dark. O pleasant Zahi,
Garden of gladness,
How many a night hast thou been witness to
My sweet love-madness?

But other kings have loved at other seasons,
Taken their pleasure
In other lands, and now hold naught of earth
But their own measure.
Grief and delight, these twain shall never cry
Truce to contention
Till death shall come and in a little sleep
Sink the dissension.

4

LINES FROM "THE PHILOSOPHER PENITENT"

* * *

For if the shaft of destiny hath quit
The bow of fate, whose hand shall be so skilled
To pluck the flying arrow back? Whose wit
Shall by a hair's breadth change the course of it?

Not ours, not ours, who spend our little time
Tracing a broken couplet on the sand,
Till, wearied of the pleasant pantomine,
Death, the great poet, adds the lacking rhyme.

5

### Woo Not The World

Woo not the world too rashly, for behold,
Beneath the painted silk and broidering,
It is a faithless and inconstant thing.
(Listen to me, Mu'tamid, growing old.)

And we — that dreamed youth's blade would never rust,
Hoped wells from the mirage, roses from the sand —
The riddle of the world shall understand
And put on wisdom with the robe of dust.

*Dulcie Lawrence Smith,*
after *Ismail Ali*

### ON PROVERBS

*by Malik ben Esma*

The best of all the proverbs be
Those which are clad in euphony,
And wisdom is a sweeter meat
If no line has too many feet.

*Henry Baerlein*

### AS FOR THE PAST

*by Ibn al-Rebii*

Traditions have been handed down to me
That would have had importance, would have had
But for my powers of credulity,
Which are so bad.

*Henry Baerlein*

## ONE PHYSICIAN ON ANOTHER

*an epigram on a physician of Egypt*
*by a physician of Antioch*

Whoever has recourse to thee
Can hope for health no more,
He's launched into perdition's sea,
A sea without a shore.

Where'er admission thou canst gain,
Where'er thy phyz can pierce,
At once the doctor they retain,
The mourners and the hearse.

*J. D. Carlyle*

## ON A LITTLE MAN WITH A VERY LARGE BEARD

*by Isaac ben Khalif*

How can thy chin that burden bear?
Is it all gravity to shock?
Is it to make the people stare?
And be thyself a laughing stock?

When I behold thy little feet
After thy beard obsequious run,
I always fancy that I meet
Some father followed by his son.

A man like thee scarce e'er appeared —
A beard like thine — where shall we find it?
Surely thou cherishest thy beard
In hopes to hide thyself behind it!

*J. D. Carlyle*

## THREE VERSES

*by Beha-din Zoheir, an Arab of Egypt* (1186–1249 A.D.)

1

### A Reply

Your letter came, and, I declare,
My longing it expresses quite;
Methinks my heart was standing by
Dictating to you what to write.

2

### A Curse

My curse on Sa'id for a bore,
On all his ancestors of yore,
His sons and grandsons evermore!

3

### An Offer

I have a little bit of fish,
And I've a crust of bread, which I
Have made of whitest flour; I wish
To give them both in charity!
They will impart a zest, you'll find,
To anything that comes behind.

*E. H. Palmer*

# FROM THE "ARABIAN NIGHTS"

(*compiled about the thirteenth century*)

*The author, or authors, of the* Thousand Nights and One Night, *as it is called in Arabic, is unknown. The tales are of various dates, the oldest being from the eighth century.*

## IN PRAISE OF THE SULTAN'S DAUGHTER

Who sprinkled the kohl of enchantment upon her eyes
And gathered the bloom of the rose from her cheeks, fruit-wise?
And who was it let down the curtained night of her hair
And through its gloom made the light of her forehead rise?

*John Payne*

## ADMONITION

There is no writer that shall not perish; but what his hand hath written endureth ever.
Write, therefore, nothing but what will please thee when thou shalt see it on the day of judgment.

*Edward William Lane*

## CONCERNING WINE

Circulate it in the large cup, and in the small; and receive it from the hand of the shining Moon:
And drink not without merry sounds; for I have observed that horses drink to the sound of whistling.

*Edward William Lane*

## I WISHED FOR MY BELOVED

I wished for my beloved; but when I beheld him I was confounded, and possessed neither tongue nor eye.
I hung down my head in honor and reverence, and would have hidden what I felt; but it would not be concealed.
I had prepared a volume of expostulation; but when we met I remembered not a word.

*Edward William Lane*

## HE PRAISES HIS LOVE

The full moon would resemble thee, were it not freckled; and the sun would be like thee, were it not eclipsed.
Verily I wonder — but how full is love of wonders: accompanied by anxieties and passion! —
That I see the way short when I go to the beloved, and long when I journey away from her.

*Edward William Lane*

## THE LOVER'S TOMB

I passed a broken tombstone in a glade;
Thereon seven blossoms of anemone.
Said I, " Who lieth here? " Earth answered me,
" Tread softly. Here a lover waits the call."
Quoth I, " May Allah help thee, slain of love,
And set thee high in heaven's highest seat."
Unhappy lovers! Even in their tombs
Amid the living in mean dust they lie.
Fain would I plant this garden all with flowers
And water it with freely flowing tears.

*E. A. Johnson*

## SUNG TO SHAHRYAR

Sleeper, the palm-trees drink the breathless noon,
A golden bee sucks at a fainting rose,
Your lips smile in their sleep. Oh, do not move.

Sleeper, Oh, do not move the gilded gauze
Which lies about your gold, or you will scare
The sun's gold fire which leaps within your crystal.

Sleeper, oh, do not move; your breasts in sleep,
Allah, they dip and rise like waves at sea;
Your breasts are snow, I breathe them in like sea foam,
I taste them like white salt. They dip and fall.

Sleeper, they dip and fall! The smiling stream
Stifles its laugh, the gold bee on the leaf
Dies of much love and rosy drunkenness,
My eyes burn the red grapes upon your breasts.

Sleeper, oh, let them burn, let my heart's flower,
Fed on the rose and santal of your flesh,
Burst like a poppy in this solitude,
In this cool silence.

*Edward Powys Mathers,*
from the French of *J. C. Mardrus*

## ON WINE

There's nothing like the blood of grapes
To give escapes
From care's infesting, festering apes.
To set the wit upon probation,
To give an edge to conversation,
To make a friend of a relation.
There's nothing like the blood of grapes.

*Edward Powys Mathers,*
from the French of *J. C. Mardrus*

## WISDOM

In life of time two rivers join,
One muddy and one clear;
Two days in time of life there are,
The soft and the severe;
You may trust time and life as far
As you would trust the spinning of a coin,
Or very near.

*Edward Powys Mathers,*
from the French of *J. C. Mardrus*

## ON A SILVER TABLE

Cast down your eyes, lift up your souls,
Dig spoons into the great sauce bowls.
Eat roast and fried and boiled and grilled,
Eat jams and jellies, warmed and chilled.
Eat quails cooked golden to the minute,
Eat nut-fed lamb with raisins in it.
Who would the warm stout capon blame,
Date-colored with judicious flame,
Because he could not sing or fly?
(He eats the better.) Nor can I . . .
The golds of man are manifold
But Allah made this kabab's gold;
He made this purslane salad sup
The soul of olives from a cup;
He set these twin and ponderous fish
To lie on mint leaves in a dish . . .
I will be silent now and eat
A meal which poets shall repeat
In songs of cooking, sound and sage,
Down all the hungry roads of age.

*Edward Powys Mathers,*
from the French of *J. C. Mardrus*

*Persia*

# *The Poetry of Persia*

The poetry of Persia, taken in the large, is the poetry of wordly sophistication. Where his neighbor, the Arab poet of the great " Days of Ignorance," was a Bedouin, a son of nature and a free man, writing of what he knew, and writing directly, the Persian poet of the classic days was a man of the world. He has the detachment of the man of the world. He seldom writes directly of his own experiences, but holds himself aloof, almost with a half smile, seeing his subject through a play of fancy. He pays enormous attention to his technic, and keeps a certain lightness of touch. He is, I think, more nearly allied to our own early English tradition than any other of the great oriental poets. For all the differences he would feel at home with much of the poetry of our own fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The lyric loves of the rose and the nightingale, the lightly exaggerated adoration of the Beloved, the sadly romantic love-stories, the graceful regrets for the passing of time, all these are common property. " Gather ye rosebuds while ye may " might almost have been written by a Persian.

One great difference there is however. Our own poetic tradition, whenever it touches on the subject of religious experience, has always been inclined to drop the lyric mood and to treat the subject in the direct manner inherited from our Hebrew religious background. Not so the Persian. The Persian poet remains true to his subtleties and his sophistications in this also. The mystic Mohammedan sect of the Sufis, who descend from Ali, nephew of the Prophet, early developed a highly technical and complicated phraseology which permeated the whole of Persian poetry, and is to be found in the work of almost every poet, whether he was himself a Sufi or not, thus making interpretation frequently extremely difficult. In this phraseology the beloved, or the friend, or the mistress, means God; amorous glance, the act of devotion when the eye glances upward at God; breeze, divine inspiration; curl, the beauty of God's

manifestations of himself; wine, prayer or love of God; intoxication or drunkenness, ecstasy of contemplation of the divinity; et cetera. The effect of investing these common words in the idiom of lyric poetry with such hidden and esoteric meanings was to give a quality of *double entendre* to the work which delighted the subtle Persians. They seem to have taken a real pleasure in the fact that it is sometimes virtually impossible for the reader to decide whether a poem is a simple and frank love poem as it appears on the surface, or the mystical expression of a religious experience. Perhaps indeed it was sometimes both, the poet celebrating the more remote as it was manifested in the immediate.

In poetry of this sort the task of the translator becomes doubly difficult, as the balance in the original must of a necessity be so delicate that the bias of the translator's own mind is sufficient to tip the scales in one direction or the other. Nothing could be more curious for instance than to compare the existing translations of the poems of Hafiz for example, and to see that two translators, according as they believe Hafiz to have been a secular or a religious poet, will translate the same poem, keeping the same obvious meanings yet making the result two entirely different things. For the purpose of this anthology which, as I have explained in the introduction is concerned only with secular poetry, I have given the more secular of these interpretations and taken them at their face value as lyric poetry, leaving to others better fitted than myself the task of deciding whatever hidden depths they may contain.

This curious borderland of the two worlds is of course only present in certain of the poets. Some of them are outspokenly secular and others as unmistakably mystic. Indeed Persian poetry as a whole suffers in this volume, as does India, very seriously from the necessary omission of a great bulk of very beautiful devotional poetry. Such poets as Jelal ud-din Rumi and Farid ud-Din Attar have seldom if ever been surpassed as mystic poets in any nation or any age.

Persia at the time of the classic renaissance, which got under way roughly speaking in 1000 and continued till the Mongol invasion in 1258, was under the domination of the Arab Caliphs of the Abbasid dynasty at Baghdad. In the middle of the seventh century the Arabs had conquered Persia, and converted practically the whole of it from the Zoroastrian creed to Islam. Thereafter, till the Mongol invasion, to quote Edward G. Browne, "Baghdad continued to be the metropolis and intellectual center of Muslim civilization, and

Arabic the language of diplomacy, philosophy, and science, and to a large extent of *belles lettres* and polite conversation."

The Arabs conquered politically and in the matter of religion; the Persians retaliated by exerting an enormous influence on their conquerors in matters of taste, especially in literature and in art. At the court of the greatest of the Abbasid Caliphs, Harun al-Rashid, whose reign began in 787 A.D., most of the ministers were Persian or of Persian descent. Many Persian customs were introduced, and as early as 770 Persian raiment was the official court dress. The Persians were a more cultured and a much more literate people than the Arabs and their refinements were soon adopted by the conquerors. Later Arabic poetry for instance shows very markedly the influence of Persia, as may be seen by a comparison of the later poems given in the Arabic section of this volume with those in the Persian group.

Gradually too the political supremacy of the Caliphs waned, and the Persian renaissance gathered strength in proportion as Persia succeeded more and more in reasserting her political independence, though she still recognized nominally the suzerainty of the Caliphs at Baghdad.

The first classic poet, a sort of forerunner of the renaissance, was Rudagi, a blind minstrel, who died in 941. The renaissance proper begins with Firdousi, who differs in some respects from his followers. As is not infrequently the case in the development of a literature when the early poets write much more in the heroic manner than the later bards, Firdousi's great epic, the "Shahnama," has a breadth of treatment and a sweep which is lacking in the work of the later, more polished poets. Firdousi also made an attempt to free the Persian language from the large number of imported Arabic words — an attempt which was not successful, since the majority of the strangers have survived to this day. After Firdousi the tradition became almost purely lyric and didactic. The great names are successively Anwari, the great writer of *kasidas*, Nizami, "the Persian Boccacio," who wrote many tales in verse, best known of which is the graceful and romantic romance of "Laili and Majnun," the mystic Jelal ud-Din Rumi, the wise and catholic Sadi, with his "Rose-Garden" and his "Orchard," Hafiz, most popular of them all, gay, witty, lyrical and essentially human, and Jami, whose colorful treatment of the popular tale of "Yusuf and Zulaikha," or Joseph and Potiphar's wife, is still read with affection. Of these

Sadi lived through the Mongol invasion, while Hafiz and Jami lived in later and still troublous times.

After the time of Jami taste in Persia degenerated rapidly. It was only at the court of the Moghul emperors in India, where Persian was the court language — after the Muslims had conquered that country — that Persian poetry enjoyed a kind of "Indian summer." To this time belong Zeb-un-Nissa and Muhammed Riza Nau'i.

It will be noticed that the name most familiar to English readers, Omar Khayyam, is not included in this list. As a matter of fact the Persians consider Omar a first-rate astronomer but "not even a third rate poet." I am well aware that to a Persian scholar the balance in the following section is thrown hopelessly awry by the inclusion of so much Omar. But, as I stated at the outset, the object of this volume is to present the poetry of the orient from a poet's standpoint, not as a subject for instruction, but as a thing to be enjoyed. And since in its English dress the poetry of Omar, thanks to the genius of Edward FitzGerald and his influence on later poets, is better poetry than that of the others who may be greater in the Persian language, I had no alternative but to include it.

The technic of Persian poetry is, as I have indicated, very highly developed. Edward G. Browne in his admirable "A Literary History of Persia," devotes some sixty pages to its subtleties and complications, and I can only refer the reader who is interested to his work. The barest outline must suffice here.

The unit in every species of Persian poem is the *bayt*, which consists of two symmetrical halves called *misra*. The *bayt* contains as a rule either six or eight feet, and the *misra* therefore either three or four. Every *bayt* in any given poem must be equal in length. The *ruba'i* or quatrain — in the plural *rubaiyat* — consists of two *bayts*, or four *misra*.

The *bayt* may either be rhymed internally, in which case the two *misra* rhyme together, or finally, in which case the rhyme is found only at the end of the *bayts*. Certain verse forms follow the Arab manner and have but one rhyme throughout the entire poem, and certain others change the rhyme from *bayt* to *bayt*. In the *ruba'i*, rendered so familiar to us by the translations of Omar, both *misra* of the first *bayt* and the second *misra* of the second *bayt* usually rhyme together, leaving the first *misra* of the second *bayt* unrhymed.

Eleven different verse forms are recognized by the Persians, but only a few need concern us here. The Persian *kasida* differs from the

Arabic form of the same name in various ways, chief among them being that the sequence of ideas is not set in Persian as it is in Arabic. The substance of the poem itself however, omitting the preamble, is rather similar and may be either a panegyric, a satire, an elegy or a religious poem. The Fragment, as in the Arabic, is a portion of a *kasida*, though the rest of the longer form may never have been written. The *ghazal* or ode is in the same metre as the *kasida* but is much shorter, seldom exceeding ten or a dozen *bayts*, and is usually erotic or mystical in its subject. In later times it became customary for the poet to introduce his pen-name into the last *bayt* of the *ghazal*. Most of the poems by Hafiz given here are *ghazals*.

The Persian *ruba'i* is always a separate entity, having no connection with any other, and in a *diwan* — which is an alphabetic collection of lyrics — the *ruba'i*, like the other lyrics, are transcribed according to the final letter of the rhyme. The effect of continuity which we get in FitzGerald's translation of Omar, for instance, is wholly the result of the translation. The *mathnawi*, or double-rhymed poem, the legitimate form for epic or didatic poetry, is sometimes called the "couplet-poem" and is familiar to us, since so much of our own poetry belongs to this category. Tennyson's "Locksley Hall" for instance is an example of a *mathnawi* poem in a Persian octametre, as follows:

|–⏑––|–⏑––|–⏑––|–⏑–|

Persian poetry seems to have been the first of the great oriental literatures to have been translated into English in any quantity. Its graces and refinements appealed strongly to the last century, and the bulk of the translations were made before 1900, though there have been a few more recently. These translations are not therefore in the contemporary poetic idiom, as are for instance the translations from the Chinese. The medium through which we see the Persian poets is for this reason a little more opaque to us. We see them less clearly and sharply, since they have for the most part been smoothed into the proper decorum for the day in which the translations appeared. Reynold A. Nicholson's admirable modern translations are a notable exception to this. It is to be hoped that the modern poets will re-examine the field of Persian literature and present this poetry to us in a somewhat more familiar dress.

# EARLY POETS

*Before 1000* A.D.

## POEMS

*by Rudagi, the blind minstrel* (*about* 880–941 A.D.)

### Lines from a Lament on Old Age

Every tooth, ah me! has crumbled, dropped and fallen in decay!
Tooth it was not, nay say rather, 'twas a brilliant lamp's bright ray;
Each was white and silvery-flashing, pearl and coral in the light,
Glistening like the stars of morning or the raindrop sparkling bright;
Not a one remaineth to me, lost through weakness and decay.
Whose the fault? " 'Twas surely Saturn's planetary rule," you say.
No, the fault of Saturn 'twas not, nor the long, long lapse of days;
" What then? " I will answer truly: " Providence which God displays."
Ever like to this the world is — ball of dust as in the past,
Ball of dust for aye remaining, long as its great law doth last.

*A. V. Williams Jackson*

### He Dyes His Hair

I dye my hair, but not — as you have said —
To heap youth's follies on an aging head.
In time of grief men walk in sober black,
And I'm in mourning, since my youth is dead.

*Eunice Tietjens,*
*after a literal translation*

*Rudagi, who was blind, was the most famous of the older minstrels, preceding the great era which opened with Firdousi. He has been called " the father of Persian song."*

### Kisses

Kisses are like salt water — that I know.
The more you drink the thirstier you grow.

*Eunice Tietjens,*
*after a literal translation*

## FOUR POEMS

### *by Shahid of Balkh (died before* 950 A.D.)

1

If grief had smoke, as hath the blazing fire,
The world would be for aye in darkness blind;
Travel the world from end to end entire,
A wise man wholly happy thou'lt not find.

2

Last night by ruined Tus I chanced to go,
An owl sat perched where once the cock did crow;
Quoth I, "What message from this waste bringest thou?"
Quoth he, "The message is, 'Woe, woe — all's woe!'"

3

'Tis with learning and wealth like narcissus and rose,
At the same time and place only one of them grows;
For, where there is learning — well, wealth is not there,
And where there is wealth — little learning's to spare.

4

### A Lover's Plaint

The cloud is weeping like a lover sad,
The garden smiling like some maiden glad,
The thunder moaneth, yea, like unto me,
That make lament each dawn I'm doomed to see!

*A. V. Williams Jackson*

## COUPLET

*by the astronomer Umara of Merv (about 990 A.D.)*

I'll hide myself within my song of love,
That I may kiss thee when thou singest it.

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

## QUATRAIN

*by Dakiki (murdered 975 A.D.)*

Long tarrying, I'm lightly held: away!
Even an honored guest too long may stay:
Waters which in the well too long repose
Lose all their flavor, and their sweetness goes.

*Edward G. Browne*

## FOUR SORTS OF USELESS MEN

*by al-Khusrawani (tenth century A.D.)*

For me four sorts of men as types of weakness stand,
Since not a whit of help comes from the four;
The leech, the priest, star-wizard, and the sorcerer,
With drug, prayer, horoscope and with spell-lore.

*A. V. Williams Jackson*

## A PANEGYRIC

*by Mantiki of Rai (about 990 A.D.)*

Methinks the moon of heaven is stricken sore,
And nightly grieveth as it wasteth more.
What late appeared a great, round, silver shield,
Now like a mall-bat enters heaven's field.
The Sáhib's horse, you'd think, had galloped by,
And cast one golden horse-shoe in the sky.

*Edward G. Browne*

## THE BLUE LOTUS OF THE NILE

*by Kisa'i of Merv* (*died bout* 990 A.D.)

The azure water-lily see, amidst the waters blue,
Now like a burnished gleaming sword, now tinged with sapphire hue;
Color like heaven, and like the heaven, as radiantly bright,
But cup all yellow, as is the moon a fortnight old in light;
Yet like a sallow pious monk during a full year's fast
Wearing from head to foot blue robes, with merit pure amassed.

*A. V. Williams Jackson*

# FROM THE "SHAHNAMA" OR "BOOK OF KINGS"

*by Firdousi* (940–1020 A.D.)
(*also spelled Firdawsi, Ferdusi, Ferdosi, Fardusi*)

## LINES FROM THE STORY OF THE LOVE OF ZAL AND RUDABEH

I

She is all sweetness. Her long fingers seem
Pencils of silver, and so beautiful
Her presence, that she breathes of heaven and love.

*James Atkinson*

*Firdousi, the "Persian Homer," is the first of the great names in Persian literature. In his youth he conceived the idea of writing in epic form the entire history of Persia, from legendary times to his own day. This work had been begun twenty years before by a poet named Dakiki, who was unfortunately murdered when he had completed only one episode. Firdousi took it up and spent twenty-five — some say thirty-five — years in completing his famous epic, which he called the* Shahnama, *or* Book of Kings. *When the manuscript was completed he had it transcribed in seven volumes, and repaired with it to the court of the powerful, though erratic, Sultan Mahmud, expecting, as was the custom of the times, to be adequately rewarded for his labor. But Mahmud listened to the advice of detractors, and sent him only the comparatively small sum of* 20,000 *silver dirhams. Firdousi, cut to the quick, divided the sum between the attendant at the Hammam baths, where he happened to be when the money arrived, and a seller of cool drinks. He then fled the country and took refuge at the court of another prince. Later, an old man of*

2

Rudabeh smil'd; and all the scene was love.
Gracious their clasping hands together twine,
By love inflam'd, devoted to his shrine.
Now they descend, and to the palace move,
Attended by the slave who knew their love.
The gay illuminations gild the scene;
All was elysium, splendid, yet serene!
Zal more amaz'd, all glowing with desire,
Gaz'd on her eyes, which beam'd celestial fire;
Her hair, her face, and ev'ry op'ning bloom,
Catch his fond soul, and fix the lover's doom.
In tissue drest, the sparkling necklace glows,
The bracelet on her hand new beauty throws.
In her small ear the pendant jewels blaze,
And ev'ry gem of variegated rays.
Bright as the various garden of the spring,
Melodious as when nature's songsters sing.
Not even roses on Arabian gales,
Thus scent the air, or fill the passing sails.
On the same couch they sit: on Zal's high head
A crown of rubies and of gems was spread.
With flow'rs diversify'd his ringlets wave,
And his bright form confess'd the warrior brave.
Rudabeh blush'd, and in her conscious eye
Blazed the fierce rapture, and the am'rous sigh;
On all his charms, his eminence, she gaz'd;
Hung o'er his manly form, and much she prais'd:
She bids him rise; now stung with keen desires,
Their fond embraces speak th'internal fires.
Bliss smil'd enchanting, and with rapture warm,
Around them love diffus'd his brightest charm:

---

*ninety or so, he returned to his native town of Tus. Many years later Mahmud repented of his scurvy treatment, and ordered* 60,000 *gold dinars worth of indigo to be sent to Firdousi. But the gift arrived too late. As the camels carrying it entered one gate of the city, the body of Firdousi was being carried to his burial through another gate.*

Thus the fierce lion bounding o'er the deer,
In playful fondness chases ev'ry fear.

* * *

Lost was each sense, dissolv'd in soft delight,
And love increases from the gazing sight:
Thus passed the fleeting hours, till the gray dawn
Beheld the sun just peeping o'er the lawn.
Till from afar the silver tabors play;
The lovers part; their pensive sighs display
The pang it gave: while tears o'erflow the face,
Their love was pictur'd in the fond embrace.
To the bright orb, " Intruding light! " they cry,
" Why early spangle all the morning sky?
" Why thus our bliss, our happier hours destroy,
" And close with pain the raptur'd scenes of joy? "

*Joseph Champion*
(This translation was published in 1788)

## SAM, THE WARRIOR, SPEAKS

. . . I destroyed
The mighty monster, whose devouring jaws
Unpeopled half the land, and spread dismay
From town to town. The world was full of horror,
No bird was seen in air, no beast of prey
In plain or forest; from the stream he drew
The crocodile; the eagle from the sky.
The country had no habitant alive,
And when I found no human being left,
I cast away all fear, and girt my loins,
And in the name of God went boldly forth,
Armed for the strife. I saw him towering rise,
Huge as a mountain, with his hideous hair
Dragging upon the ground; his long black tongue
Shut up the path; his eyes two lakes of blood;
And, seeing me, so horrible his roar
The earth shook with affright, and from his mouth
A flood of poison issued. Like a lion
Forward I sprang, and in a moment drove

A diamond-pointed arrow through his tongue,
Fixing him to the ground. Another went
Down his deep throat, and dreadfully he writhed.
A third passed through his middle. Then I raised
My battle-ax, cow-headed, and with one
Tremendous blow, dislodged his venomous brain,
And deluged all around with blood and poison.
There lay the monster dead, and soon the world
Regained its peace and comfort.

*James Atkinson*

## THE DEATH OF SOHRAB

(*The great hero Rustem and his son Sohrab, neither knowing the identity of the other, are engaged in mortal combat.*)

Again, dismounting, each the other viewed
With sullen glance, and swift the fight renewed;
Clenched front to front, again they tug and bend,
Twist their broad limbs as every nerve would rend;
With rage convulsive Rustem grasps him round;
Bends his strong back, and hurls him to the ground;
Him, who had deemed the triumph all his own;
But dubious of his power to keep him down,
Like lightning quick he gives the deadly thrust,
And spurns the stripling weltering in the dust.

Writhing with pain Sohrab in murmurs sighed —
And thus to Rustem — "Vaunt not, in thy pride;
Upon myself this sorrow have I brought,
Thou but the instrument of fate — which wrought
My downfall; thou art guiltless — guiltless quite;
Oh! had I seen my father in the fight,
My glorious father! Life will soon be o'er,
And his great deeds enchant my soul no more!
Of him my mother gave the mark and sign,
For him I sought, and what an end is mine!
My only wish on earth, my constant sigh,
Him to behold, and with that wish I die.
But hope not to elude his piercing sight,
In vain for thee the fiercest glooms of night;

Couldst thou through ocean's depths for refuge fly,
Or midst the star-beams track the upper sky!
Rustem, with vengeance armed, will reach thee there,
His soul the prey of anguish and despair."

An icy horror chills the champion's heart,
His brain whirls round with agonizing smart;
O'er his wan cheek no gushing sorrows flow,
Senseless he sinks beneath the weight of woe;
Relieved at length, with frenzied look, he cries;
"Prove thou art mine, confirm my doubting eyes!
For I am Rustem!" Piercing was the groan,
Which burst from his torn heart — as wild and lone,
He gazed upon him. Dire amazement shook
The dying youth, and mournful thus he spoke:
"If thou art Rustem, cruel is thy part,
No warmth paternal seems to fill thy heart;
Else hadst thou known me when, with strong desire,
I fondly claimed thee for my valiant sire;
Now from my body strip the shining mail,
Untie these bands, ere life and feeling fail;
And on my arm the direful proof behold!
Thy sacred bracelet of refulgent gold!
When the loud brazen drums were heard afar,
And, echoing round, proclaimed the pending war,
Whilst parting tears my mother's eyes o'erflowed,
This mystic gift her bursting heart bestowed:
'Take this,' she said, 'thy father's token wear,
And promised glory will reward thy care.'
The hour is come, but fraught with bitterest woe,
We met in blood to wail the fatal blow."

The loosened mail unfolds the bracelet bright,
Unhappy gift! to Rustem's wildered sight,
Prostrate he falls — "By my unnatural hand,
My son, my son is slain — and from the land
Uprooted." Frantic, in the dust his hair
He rends in agony and deep despair;
The western sun had disappeared in gloom
And still the champion wept his cruel doom.

*James Atkinson*

## VALEDICTORY

*by Firdousi*

(*After thirty years of labor he closed the Shahnama with these lines.*)

I shall live on; the seeds of words have I
Sown broadcast, and I shall not wholly die.

*James Atkinson*

## FROM HIS SATIRE ON THE SULTAN MAHMUD

*by Firdousi*

Oh, had thy father graced a kingly throne,
Thy mother been for royal virtues known,
A different fate the poet then had shared,
Honors and wealth had been his just reward;
But how remote from thee a glorious line!
No high, ennobling ancestry is thine;
From a vile stock thy bold career began,
A blacksmith was thy sire of Isfahan.
Alas! from vice can goodness ever spring?
Is mercy hoped for in a tyrant king?
Can water wash the Ethiopian white?
Can we remove the darkness from the night?
The tree to which a bitter fruit is given,
Would still be bitter in the bowers of heaven;
And a bad heart keeps on its vicious course;
Or, if it changes, changes for the worse;
Whilst streams of milk, where Eden's flowerets blow,
Acquire more honied sweetness as they flow.
The reckless king who grinds the poor like thee,
Must ever be consigned to infamy!

*James Atkinson*

*When Firdousi had been treated in a niggardly fashion by the Sultan Mahmud, he composed in anger a celebrated satire on the Sultan, from which these lines are taken. He thus destroyed in a breath the reputation as a patron of letters which Mahmud, who was a self-made man, had tried for years to establish.*

# THE LATER RENAISSANCE

## FRAGMENT OF AN ODE IN THE ARABIAN MANNER

*by Minuchihri (about* 1000 A.D.)

O tentsman, haste, and strike the tent I pray!
The caravan's already under way;
The drummer sounds already the first drum;
Their loads the drivers on the camels lay.
The evening-prayer is nigh, and lo! to-night
The sun and moon opposed do stand at bay,
Save that the moon climbs upward through the sky,
While sinks the sun o'er Babel's mountains gray,
Like to two scales of golden balance, when
One pan doth upwards and one downwards weigh.

*Edward G. Browne*

## QUATRAIN

*by the physician and metaphysician Avicenna (Ibn Sina)* (980–1037 A.D.)

I solved all problems, down from Saturn's wreath
Unto this lowly sphere of earth beneath,
And leapt out free from bonds of fraud and lies,
Yea, every knot was loosed, save that of death!

*E. H. Whinfield*

*This quatrain is often attributed to Omar Khayyam, but later research makes it plain that it was written by Avicenna.*

## A CURSE

*by Unsuri (died about* 1040 A.D.)

Assuredly, as thou hast thirsted for blood,
Destiny will also thirst for thine,
And the very hairs of thy body
Will become daggers to destroy thee!

*James Atkinson*

*Unsuri was court poet to the famous sultan Mahmud, and a friend to Firdousi, who incorporated this image in his epic* Shahnama.

## QUATRAINS

*by the "crazy saint" Baba Tahir (about* 1055 A.D.)
*(who wrote in dialect)*

I am that wastrel called a Kalandar,
I have no home, no country, and no lair,
By day I wander aimless o'er the earth,
And when night falls my pillow is a stone.

What blundering moth in all the world like me?
What madman like me in the universe?
The very serpents and the ants have nests,
But I — poor wretch — no ruin shelters me.

He who has suffered grief knows well its cry,
As knows the crucible when gold is pure;
Come then ye Burnt-in-Heart, chaunt we laments,
For well we know what 'tis to Burn-in-Heart.

O Burnt-in-Heart, come ye and mourn with me,
Mourn we the flight of that most lovely Rose;
Hie we with the ecstatic nightingale to the rose-garden,
And when she ceases mourning, we will mourn.

The meadow of my thought grows naught save grief,
My garden bears no flower save that of woe;
So arid is the desert of my heart,
Not even the herbage of despair grows there.

Art thou a lion or leopard, O heart, O heart,
That thou warrest ever with me, O heart, O heart,
Fall thou into my hands; I'll spill thy blood,
To see what color it is, O heart, O heart!

*Edward Heron-Allen*

## QUATRAIN

### *by Baba Tahir*

Ah, when will health to my sick heart return!
The good advice I give it does but spurn.
Flung to the winds, 'twill not be borne away,
Cast in the flames, alas, it will not burn.

*Elizabeth Curtis Brenton,*
after *Edward Heron-Allen*

## FRAGMENT OF A KASIDA

### *by Farrukhi* (*about* 1058 A.D.)

Since the meadow hides its face in satin shot with greens and blues,
And the mountains wrap their brows in silver veils of seven hues,
Earth is teeming like the musk-pod with aromas rich and rare,
Foliage bright as parrot's plumage doth the graceful willow wear.
Yestere'en the midnight breezes brought the tidings of the spring:
Welcome, O ye northern gales, for this glad promise which ye bring!
Up its sleeve the wind, meseemeth, pounded musk hath stored away,
While the garden fills its lap with shining dolls, as though for play.
On the branches of syringa necklaces of pearls we see,
Ruby ear-rings of Badakhshan sparkle on the Judas-tree.
Since the branches of the rose-bush carmine cups and beakers bore
Human-like five-fingered hands reach downwards from the sycamore.

Gardens all chameleon-coated, branches with chameleon whorls,
Pearly-lustrous pools around us, clouds above us raining pearls!
On the gleaming plain this coat of many colors doth appear
Like a robe of honor granted in the Court of our Amir.

*Edward G. Browne*

## IN PRAISE OF HIS LOVE

### *by Mu'izzi* (1092–1147 A.D.)

O thou whose cheeks are the Pleiades and whose lips are coral,
Thy Pleiades are the torment of the heart, thy coral is the food of the soul.
In chase of those Pleiades my back hath become like the sky,[1]
For love of that coral my eyes have become like the sea.

Methinks, thy down is a smoke through which are seen rose-leaves,
Methinks, thy tresses are a cloud in which is hidden the sun —
A smoke that hath set my stack on fire,
A cloud that hath loosed from my eyes the rain.

Thine eye, by wounding my heart, hath made me helpless;
Thy tress, by ravishing my soul, hath made me distraught.
If thine eye pierces my heart, 'tis right, for thou art my sweetheart;
And if thy tress ravishes my soul, 'tis fair, for thou art my soul's desire.

In peace, the banquet-hall without thy countenance is not lighted;
In war, the battle-field without thy stature is not arrayed.
The banquet-hall without thy countenance is the sky without the moon;
The battle-field without thy stature is the garden without the cypress.

*Amir Mu'izzi, the poet laureate of Sanjar, has been called "one of the sweetest singers and most graceful wits in Persia." "In his verse," says Edward G. Browne, "for the first time we find in constant use all the once original and striking, but now hackneyed, similes with which every student of Persian poetry is familiar."*

[1] I.e. curved.

My body is in pain from thine eyes full of enchantments,
My heart is in sorrow from thy tresses full of guile —
A pain that thy sight turns in a moment to pleasure,
A sorrow that thy speech turns in an instant to joy.

Thy face is a tulip for delicacy and pinkness,
Thy teeth are pearls for brightness and purity.
I never heard of pearls in honey-laden coral,
I never heard of tulips amidst musk-shedding hyacinths.[2]

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

## FRAGMENT OF A GHAZAL

*by Mu'izzi*

Her face were a moon, if o'er the moon could a cloud of musk blow free;
And her stature a cypress, if cypresses bore flowers of anemone.
For if to the crown of the cypress-tree could anemone-clusters cling,
Perchance it might be accounted right such musk o'er the moon to fling.
For her rounded chin and her curvéd tress, alack! her lovers all
Lend bended backs for her polo-sticks, and a heart for the polo-ball!
Yet if hearts should ache through the witchery of the Harut-spells of her eye,
Her rubies twain are ever fain to offer the remedy.

*Edward G. Browne*

## RUBAIYAT

*by the astronomer Omar al-Khayyam (died about* 1123 A.D.)

Awake! for morning in the bowl of night
Has flung the stone that puts the stars to flight:
And lo! the hunter of the east has caught
The Sultan's turret in a noose of light.

*Edward FitzGerald's magical version of Omar is so well known and so readily accessible that I have not considered it necessary to do*

[2] I.e. dark fragrant locks of hair.

Before the phantom of false morning died,
Methought a voice within the tavern cried,
"When all the temple is prepared within,
Why nods the drowsy worshipper outside?

And, as the cock crew, those who stood before
The tavern shouted — "Open then the door!
You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more."

Come, fill the cup, and in the fire of spring
Your winter-garment of repentance fling:
The bird of time has but a little way
To flutter — and the bird is on the wing.

Whether at Naishapur or Babylon,
Whether the cup with sweet or bitter run,
The wine of life keeps oozing drop by drop,
The leaves of life keep falling one by one.

With me along the strip of herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of slave and sultan is forgot —
And peace to Mahmud on his golden throne!

---

*more than suggest it here. What is perhaps not so generally known however is that Omar's fame in the English speaking world, thanks to Mr. FitzGerald, is much greater than his fame in Persia, where he is considered as a great astronomer but a poet "not even of the third class," to quote the great authority Edward G. Browne. Moreover many of the quatrains attributed to him are also attributed, on equal or better authority, to other poets. His work belongs so definitely to the Persian tradition of revolt, and has in the original so little personal idiom, that it is almost impossible to decide what he did write, since with the system of transcription by hand many "wandering quatrains" were separated from their authors. The sense of continuity moreover is entirely due to Mr. FitzGerald's arrangement, as each quatrain of this variety in Persian is a separate entity in itself, and is always treated as such, being transcribed in alphabetical order, according to the final letter of the rhyme.*

A book of verses underneath the bough,
A jug of wine, a loaf of bread — and thou
Beside me singing in the wilderness —
Oh, wilderness were Paradise enow!

The worldly hope men set their hearts upon
Turns ashes — or it prospers; and anon,
Like snow upon the desert's dusty face,
Lighting a little hour or two — is gone.

They say the lion and the lizard keep
The courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep,
And Bahram, that great hunter — the wild ass
Stamps o'er his head, but cannot break his sleep.

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The rose as where some buried Caesar bled;
That every hyacinth the garden wears
Dropt in her lap from some once lovely head.

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and saint, and heard great argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same door where in I went.

With them the seed of wisdom did I sow,
And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow;
And this was all the harvest that I reaped —
"I came like water, and like wind I go."

There was the door to which I found no key;
There was the veil through which I might not see:
Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee
There was — and then no more of Thee and Me.

Then to the lip of this poor earthern urn
I leaned, the secret of my life to learn:
And lip to lip it murmured — "While you live,
Drink! — for, once dead, you never shall return."

I think the vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answered, once did live,
And drink; and ah! the passive lip I kissed,
How many kisses might it take — and give!

For I remember stopping by the way
To watch a potter thumping his wet clay:
And with its all-obliterated tongue
It murmured — "Gently, brother, gently, pray!"

Perplext no more with human or divine,
To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign,
And lose your fingers in the tresses of
The cypress-slender minister of wine.

So when that angel of the darker drink
At last shall find you by the river-brink,
And, offering his cup, invite your soul
Forth to your lips to quaff — you shall not shrink.

Why, if the soul can fling the dust aside,
And naked on the air of heaven ride,
Wer' 't not a shame — wer' 't not a shame for him
In this clay carcass crippled to abide?

'Tis but a tent where takes his one day's rest
A sultan to the realm of death addrest;
The sultan rises, and the dark Ferrash
Strikes, and prepares it for another guest.

And fear not lest existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like no more;
The eternal Saki [1] from that bowl has poured
Millions of bubbles like us, and will pour.

I sent my soul through the invisible,
Some letter of that after-life to spell:
And by and by my soul returned to me,
And answered "I myself am heaven and hell."

[1] Saki — cupbearer.

We are no other than a moving row
Of magic shadow-shapes that come and go
Round with the sun-illumined lantern held
In midnight by the master of the show;

But helpless pieces of the game he plays
Upon this checker-board of nights and days;
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the closet lays.

The moving finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your piety nor wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all your tears wash out a word of it.

And that inverted bowl they call the sky,
Whereunder crawling cooped we live and die,
Lift not your hands to *it* for help — for it
As impotently moves as you or I.

Yet ah, that spring should vanish with the rose!
That youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
The nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

Would but some winged angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded roll of fate,
And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

Ah love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits — and then
Re-mould it nearer to the heart's desire!

Yon rising moon that looks for us again —
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same garden — and for *one* in vain!

And when like her, oh Saki, you shall pass
Among the guests star-scattered on the grass,
And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made one — turn down an empty glass!

Tamam

*Edward FitzGerald*

## TWO QUATRAINS
### *by Omar al-Khayyam*

1

On two days, it steads not to run from thy grave,
The appointed and the unappointed day;
On the first, neither balm nor physician can save,
Nor thee, on the second, the universe slay.

2

On earth's wide thoroughfares below —
Two only men contented go:
Who knows what's right and what's forbid,
And he from whom is knowledge hid.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson,*
from the German of *von Hammer-Purgstall*

## TWO QUATRAINS
### *by Omar al-Khayyam*

1

Oh! that there were some place where men could rest,
Some end to look for in this lonely quest,
Some hope that in a hundred thousand years
Our dust might blossom on the Mother's breast!

2

Alas for me! The book of youth is read:
The fresh glad spring is now December dead:
That bird of joy whose name was youth is flown;
Ah me, I know not how he came or fled!

*Whitley Stokes*

## A QUATRAIN

*by Omar al-Khayyam*

The red wine in a festal cup is sweet,
With sound of lute and dulcimer is sweet;
A holy man who does not think it so,
He too — a thousand miles from us — is sweet.

*H. G. Keene*

## A QUATRAIN

*by Omar al-Khayyam*

A little while a slave to sight and sound,
A little while by good and evil bound,
Though life and death on all thy steps attend,
Thy resting-place at last is in the ground.

*E. A. Johnson*

## TWO QUATRAINS CONCERNING LOVE

*by Omar al-Khayyam*

1

Who brought thee last night lovely to my side?
Who drew thy warm veil cunningly aside?
Who snatched thee back again so soon, so soon?
Who set this hell-fire burning in my side?

2

Life is so short, yet sleeps thy lovely head;
Why make so soon a death-bed of thy bed?
O love, awake! thy beauty wastes away —
Thou shalt sleep on and on when thou art dead.

*Richard Le Gallienne,*
*after several literal translations*

## THREE SATIRICAL QUATRAINS

*by Omar al-Khayyam*

1

And do you think that unto such as you,
A maggot-minded, starved, fanatic crew,
God gave the secret, and denied it me? —
Well, well, what matters it! believe that too.

2

Old Khayyam, say you, is a debauchee;
If only you were half as good as he!
He sins no sins but gentle drunkenness,
Warm-hearted mirth and kind adultery.

3

But yours the cold heart, and the murderous tongue,
The wintry soul that hates to hear a song,
The close-shut fist, the mean and measuring eye,
And all the little poisoned ways of wrong.

*Richard Le Gallienne,*
*after several literal translations*

## FOUR QUATRAINS ON WINE

*by Omar al-Khayyam*

1

The wine-cup is the little silver well
Where truth, if truth there be, doth ever dwell;
Death too is there — and death who would not seek? —
And love that in itself is heaven and hell.

2

The wine-cup is a wistful magic glass,
Wherein all day old faces smile and pass,
Dead lips press ours upon its scented brim,
Old voices whisper many a sweet " alas! "

3

And sometimes in the nodding afternoon,
When all is listening still and half-a-swoon,
Sudden one lifts a shining startled face —
Hark! 'tis the magic bird, the magic tune!

4

Drunkards! so be it — yet if all were wise,
All would be drunk like us, with dreaming eyes:
Poor sober world, so doleful all the day,
Leave mosque and mart, and join our paradise.

*Richard Le Gallienne,*
after several literal translations

## FRAGMENT

*by the court poet Anwari (died* 1191 A.D.)

" Have patience; patience will perform thy work
Quickly and well," to me a comrade said;
" The water to the river will return;

Thine aims shall speed as never they have sped."
I said: " Suppose the water does return,
What boots it, if the fish meanwhile be dead? "

*Edward G. Browne*

## THE POET REFLECTS

*by Anwari*

Unless fate rules the course of life entire,
Why fall things not according to desire?
To good or evil, as fate pulls therein,
So runs the world; and all is planned in vain.

Day after day a thousand pictures pass,
But never truth appears in fancy's glass.
" How? Why? " The painter of these changing scenes,
He works without a cause, without a means.

Our hands are impotent to loose or bind,
Life's joy and sorrow let us meet resigned.
Beneath yon sky-blue dome our earthly state
Hangs on the order of celestial fate.

O time, great lord of nature! since by thee
My body natural is held in fee,
Why with such eager spite dost thou devise,
Most ancient humpback! torments for the wise?

No mind can reach thy revolution's cause,
No eye discover thy mysterious laws.
From thy dark wheels what anguish o'er me fell
Ah, 'tis a plaint would take long years to tell.

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

## QUATRAIN

*by Anwari*

O'er the garden water goes the wind alone
To rasp and to polish the cheek of the wave;
The fire is quenched on the dear hearthstone,
But it burns again on the tulips brave.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson,*
from the German of *von Hammer—Purgstall*

## FROM THE TALE OF "LAILI AND MAJNUN"

*By Nizami* (1141–1203 A.D.)

### Majnun, Mad for Love of Laili, Dwells among the Beasts

* * *

For tiger, wolf, and panther gather round
The madman as their king, and lick the ground;
Fox and hyena fierce their snarling cease;
Lion and fawn familiar meet in peace;
Vulture and soaring eagle, on the wing,
Around his place of rest their shadows fling;
Like Solomon, o'er all extends his reign;
His pillow is the lion's shaggy mane;
The wily leopard, on the herbage spread,
Forms like a carpet his romantic bed:
And lynx and wolf, in harmony combined,
Frisk o'er the sward, and gambol with the hind.
All pay their homage with respect profound,
As if in circles of enchantment bound.

*Nizami was a famous teller of stories in verse, and has been called the Boccaccio of Persia. The sad story of the love of Laili and the love-maddened Majnun is the most popular romantic tale in Persia. Many poets have treated it, but Nizami's version is considered the best. His* Khusran and Shirin, *another tragic tale, is almost equally famous.*

Among the rest, one little fawn
Skipped nimbly o'er the flowery lawn;
And, beautifully delicate,
Sprang where the wondering madman sate:
So soft, so meek, so sweetly mild,
So shy, so innocently wild,
And, ever playful in his sight,
The fondling grew his great delight;
He loved its pleasing form to trace,
And kiss its full black eyes and face,
Thinking of Laili all the while;
For fantasies the heart beguile;
And with the illusive dream impressed,
He hugged the favorite to his breast:
With his own hand the fawn he fed,
And choicest herbs before it spread;
And all the beasts assembled there
Partook of his indulgent care,
And day and night, they, unconstrained,
In wondrous harmony remained.

*James Atkinson*

## THE EARTHQUAKE

### *by Nizami*

* * *

When that earthquake, which rent even the skies,
Overwhelmed and hid from sight the cities of the earth!
So great a trembling fell on mountain and on plain,
That the dust rose up to the collar of heaven;
The earth became unstable as the rolling sphere,
And was tossed up and down like a juggler's ball.
Such a shock arose from the clarion of the blast,
That it tossed the fishes far from the streams of the valleys;
Vivid lightnings with their flashes divided the heavens,
The joints of the earth were broken asunder;
The fissures of the ground were filled with water,
By the frequent concussions the mountains were splintered:

The faces of young bearded men changed color,
As when the bursting of the Nile-dams fills Egypt with anxiety;
And the compression of the earth was so severe,
That in its pressure the hills were squeezed into atoms;
Not a link in the chain remained undivided,
Not a wall retained its cement unbroken.
Of the treasures which that day gave to the winds
To many a bosom was lost all remembrance;
From all those men and women, and old men and children,
Came forth no voice save a general uproar.

*S. Robinson*

## THE POET, IN HIS POVERTY, COMMUNES WITH HIMSELF

*by Nizami*

1

So I live in my nook, turning my face from the world,
My nourishment a handful of bruised roasted barley,
Like a serpent seated at the head of a treasure:
Each day, from night to night, shut-up at work,
Like a bee, which, laboring in its narrow cell,
Produceth a copious granary of sweetmeats.

2

I am but a glass which thou couldst break with a stone:
Of my name or my father's name the world maketh small account.
Thou seest in me but brass besmeared with gold;
A corpse sprinkled with rose-water.
Heaven at its dawn looked upon me brightly,
But what hath it profited me, since I am but a lion of snow?
No lion am I to fight with an enemy;
Enough is it for me to fight with myself!

3

Many, like to me, are sleeping in the grave,
And no one remembereth that all must sleep there too!
Call me to mind, O fresh young partridge,

When thou passest by the head of my tomb,
And mayest see the grass growing out of my clay,
My simple pallet all broken down,
The dust of my couch blown away by the wind;
Not remembered by one of my coevals.
Lay then thine hand on that heap of ruins,
And recall to thy recollection my pure spirit;
Shed over me a tear in thy far-off dwelling,
And I upon thee will shed light out of heaven;
To me shalt thou pray for whatever requireth speed,
And I will be thy surety that the prayer shall be fulfilled.
Thou wilt send me a benediction, I will send one to thee;
Come, and I will come down from the skies unto thee.
Think of me as of one alive like thyself;
I will come in the spirit, if thou comest to me.
Hold me not as one who hath lost his companion,
For I shall look upon thee, if thou seest not me.

*S. Robinson*

## FRAGMENTS FROM THE "BIRD-PARLIAMENT"

*by Farid ud-Din Attar (about 1150–1222 A.D.)*

1

For like a child sent with a fluttering light
To feel his way along a gusty night
Man walks the world: again and yet again
The lamp shall be by fits of passion slain:
But shall not He who sent him from the door
Relight the lamp once more, and yet once more?

2

Shah Mahmud, absent on an enterprise,
Ayaz, the very darling of his eyes,
At home under an evil eye fell sick,
Then cried the Sultan to a soldier, "Quick!

*Farid ud-Din Attar is one of the greatest of the mystic poets of Persia. He can only be truly appreciated in his religious poetry.*

To horse! to horse! without a moment's stay —
The shortest road with all the speed you may —
Or, by the Lord, your head shall pay for it! "
Off went the soldier, plying spur and bit —
Over the sandy desert, over green
Valley, and mountain, and the stream between,
Without a moment's stop for rest or bait —
Up to the city — to the palace gate —
Up to the presence-chamber at a stride —
And lo! The Sultan at his darling's side!
Then thought the soldier — " I have done my best,
And yet shall die for it." The Sultan guessed
His thought and smiled. " Indeed your best you did,
The nearest road you knew, and well you rid:
And if *I* knew a shorter, my excess
Of knowledge does but justify thy less."

3

" He that a miser lives and miser dies,
At the Last Day what figure shall he rise? "

A fellow all his life lived hoarding gold,
And, dying, hoarded left it. And behold,
One night his son saw peering through the house
A man, with yet the semblance of a mouse,
Watching a crevice in the wall — and cried —
" My father? " — " Yes," the Musulman replied,
" Thy father! " — " But why watching thus? " — " For fear
Lest any smell my treasure buried here."
" But wherefore, Sir, so metamousified? "
" Because, my son, such is the true outside
Of the inner soul by which I lived and died."

*Edward FitzGerald*

## FROM "THE SCROLL OF WISDOM"

*by Sadi* (*about* 1184–1292 A.D.)

Many are the monarchs of exalted rank;
Many are the warriors who overrun kingdoms;
Many are the fierce warriors who scatter armies;
Many are the lion-like men who smite with the sword;
Many are the moon-faced beauties of graceful figure;
Many are the lovely ones with stature like the sun;
Many are the newly arisen with lovely cheeks;
Many are the freshly decked brides;
Many are the famous, and many are the fortunate;
Many are they like the cypress in stature, and many are the rosy-cheeked beauties
Who have rent the garment of life,
Who have drawn the head within the wall of the grave.
With such the harvest of their life hath been scattered to the winds,
So that never hath anyone a trace of them.

The world hath no permanence, O my son!
Pass not thy life therein in negligence.
Fix not thy heart upon this perishable abode.
From Sadi receive this one piece of advice.

*Arthur N. Wollaston*

*"Shaykh Sadi," as the Persians call him, lived for many years the wandering life of a dervish, travelling over most of North Africa and Asia Minor. Finally he settled in his native town of Shiraz, and attained the ripe age of* 110 *lunar years. He was famed as much for his wit and his worldly wisdom as for his piety. No poet in Persia has a wider popularity, owing to his great catholicity. "In his works is matter for every taste," says Edward G. Browne, "the highest and the lowest, the most refined and the most coarse."*

## FROM THE "GULISTAN" OR "ROSE-GARDEN"

*by Sadi*

### In Praise of the King

—The King,
The asylum of the world,
The shadow of the creator,
And the light of the bounty of the all-provider,
The treasury of the age,
The retreat of true religion,
The aided by Heaven,
The triumphant over his enemies,
The victorious arm of the empire,
The lamp of the excelling faith,
The beauty of mankind,
The glory of Islam,
Sad, the son of the most puissant king of kings,
Master of attending nations,
Lord of the kings of Arabia and Persia,
Sovereign of land and sea,
Heir to the throne of Sulaiman,
Atabak the Great,
Muzaffaru'd-din Abu-bakr-bin-Sad-bin-Zangi:
May God Most High perpetuate the good fortune of both,
And prosper all their righteous undertakings!

*Edward B. Eastwick*

## ADVICE

*by Sadi*

I

All Adam's race are members of one frame;
Since all, at first, from the same essence came.
When by hard fortune one limb is oppressed,
The other members lose their wonted rest:
If thou feel'st not for others' misery,
A son of Adam is no name for thee.

2

Money abides not in the palm
Of those who careless live,
Nor patience in the lover's heart,
Nor water in the sieve!

3

The well-fed warrior will with ardour fight;
The starved will be as ardent in his flight.

4

To door of king, or minister, or peer,
Draw thou not nigh unless with patrons girt;
For if a poor man at the gate appear,
Warders his collars seize, and dogs his shirt!

5

They who in youth to manners ne'er attend,
Will in advancing years small gain acquire:
Wood, while 'tis green, thou mayst at pleasure bend;
When dry, thou canst not change it save by fire.

6

A veteran choose for deeds of high emprise
He the fierce lion in his noose will tame;
The youth may mighty be, of giant size,
But in the fight fear will unnerve his frame:
War to the well-trained warrior is the same
As some nice quillet of the law is to the wise.

7

Reply not roughly to smooth language, nor
Contend with him who knocks at peace's door.

8

When thou hast failed in every known resource,
Then to the sword 'tis right to have recourse.

9

Go, tell the hornet — fierce, ungentle thing,
We want no honey: but at least don't sting!

10

On earth there is no gratitude, I trow;
Or none, perhaps, to use it now pretend.
None learn of me the science of the bow,
Who make me not their target in the end.

*Edward B. Eastwick*

## A TALE IN PROSE AND VERSE

*by Sadi*

I saw an Arab sitting in a ring of jewel-dealers at Basra, telling a story how once upon a time in the desert he had lost his road, and had not a morsel of food remaining, so that he had settled in his heart that he must die. "Suddenly," said he, "I lighted upon a bag which felt to be full of grain. Never can I forget the *zuk wa shadi* — the relish and the joy — of thinking that it was indeed parched corn, and then the agony and despair to find it only a bag of pearls.

The desert traveller mid the driving sands,
Sinking with thirst — what matters if his hands
Hold pearls or dust? His dried mouth curseth both!
So, when a man with hunger falls to die,
What difference whether in his girdle cloth
He hideth gold or only frippery?

*Sir Edwin Arnold*

## TWO COUPLETS

*by Sadi*

1

The counsels of the wise may go awry,
The fool may hit his mark at the first try.

2

What could he know of sky and stars,
or heaven's all-hidden life,
Who did not see in his own house
the knave that kissed his wife?

*Sir Edwin Arnold*

## FROM THE "HUNDRED LOVE SONGS"

*by Kamal ud-Din of Isfahan (tortured to death in* 1237 A.D.)

O love, thy hair! thy locks of night and musk!
The very wind therein doth lose his way,
While in the perfumed darkness he would stray;
And my heart, too, is lost in scented dusk.

Thy crescent brows irradiate the night;
Love, of thy lips and tresses give thou me —
Thy breast is like a restless, heaving sea;
Thine eyes are stars of sorrow and delight.

Yet grieve not that I grieve, Soul of the Sea —
What is my heart that thou shouldst comfort it
With wine or song, with smile or dance or wit?
Dust of thy threshold is enough for me.

Fast bound am I, as are thy tresses long,
And bent am I, as bend thy brows so fair.
Low to the earth I fall, as falls thy hair,
And clasp thy feet, as thy small sandals' thong.

Who once hath loved thy pale and fervent face,
To him the rose is dead and cold the flame,
Deaf to all music save thy voice and name,
Blind to all beauty save thy subtle grace.

*Ethel Watts Mumford* and *Louis H. Gray*

## FROM THE "DIWANI SHAMSI TABRIZ"

*by Jelal ud-Din Rumi* (1207–1273 A.D.)

Happy the moment when we are seated in the palace, thou and I,
With two forms and with two figures but with one soul, thou and I.
The colors of the grove and the voice of the birds will bestow immortality
At the time when we come into the garden, thou and I.
The stars of heaven will come to gaze upon us;
We shall show them the moon itself, thou and I.
Thou and I, individuals no more, shall be mingled in ecstasy,
Joyful, and secure from foolish babble, thou and I.
All the bright-plumed birds of heaven will devour their hearts with envy
In the place where we shall laugh in such a fashion, thou and I.
This is the greatest wonder, that thou and I, sitting here in the same nook,
Are at this moment both in Irak and Khorasan, thou and I.

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

## ISOLATED IMAGES

*by Jelal ud-Din Rumi*

A bracelet of bright hair about the bone.

. . . . ye cannot bind the free
And mountain-surging thunder of the sea.

*Reynold A. Nicholson*

*Jelal ud-Din Rumi was one of the greatest mystic poets of any nation or any age. His work cannot be properly represented in a volume which does not include religious poetry, but some reference to it seemed necessary here. He was a devout Sufi, and greatly devoted to a fanatical wandering saint named Shamsi Tabriz, whose name he signed to his own Diwan, apparently as a sign of respect.*

## ODE

### *by Hafiz* (*died* 1389 A.D.)

The days of distance and the nights apart
Are at an end,
All the long lonely winter of the heart
Is at an end:
No more forever shall the autumn gloom,
No more forever shall December freeze,
For lo! the sweet swift-footed April breeze
Fills all the world with fragrance and with bloom —
O, my own love and friend,
Our grief is at an end!

Our grief is ended and our joys begun,
We have climbed the night — at last we reach the sun;
And the wide world from pole to pole is bright
With the effulgent face of our delight,
From shining end to end.

Deep in the scented shadow of your hair,
I bow my head and weep for very bliss,
So happy I can scarce believe me there,
Too happy even to kiss;

*Hafiz, the most famous poet of Persia, lived a long and comparatively peaceful life, in an age of war and struggle. Ruler after ruler rose and fell, but each, including the Tartar invader, treated Hafiz with respect. During his latter years he taught the Koran at a college founded for his benefit. The Sufis, the mystic sect of the Mohammedans, who follow Ali, nephew of the prophet, have always claimed him as one of their own, and interpret his least word as fraught with profound spiritual meaning, much as the* Songs of Solomon *are interpreted mystically. Others however declare that his songs are nothing more than the love songs they appear to be on the surface. The poems given here are not included for the religious qualities they may or may not possess — since religious poetry is outside the scope of this volume as explained in the introduction — but for their obvious poetic beauty.*

For, love, O most desired and lovely friend,
Through your great locks I see the rising sun,
The solitary night is at an end,
Our morning is begun.

What care I if, for love of your fair face,
To the wide winds my work and place I throw!
My work is just to love you, and the place
Just where you are the only place I know.

Ah! to the wine-shop swiftly let us come,
With happy harp and loud exultant drum,
And with a mighty voice the Saki call —
" Deep cups and many, many cups for all! "
What matter how much money we shall spend,
For, O most lovely and beloved friend,
To-day the grief of HAFIZ, the long grief,
In a wild blessedness beyond belief
Is at an end.

*Richard Le Gallienne*

## DAUGHTER OF THE VINE

*by Hafiz*

Send the criers round the market, call the royst'rers band to hear,
Crying, " Oyez! All ye good folk through the loved one's realm, give ear!

" Lost, a handmaid! Strayed a while since! Lost, the vine's wild daughter, lost!
Raise the hue and cry to seize her! Danger lurks where she is near.

" Round her head she wears a foam-crown; all her garb glows ruby-hued;
Thief of wits is she; detain her, lest ye dare not sleep for fear.

" Whoso brings me back the tart maid, take for sweetmeat all my soul!
Though the deepest hell conceal her, go ye down, go hale her here.

"She's a wastrel, she's a wanton, shame-abandoned, rosy-red;
If ye find her, send her forthright back to HAFIZ, balladier."

*Walter Leaf*

*In the original metre.*

## HIS LOVE COMES TO HIM

*by Hafiz*

Flask in hand and verse-reciting,
All a-sweat, with hair dis-heveled,
Her narcissus-eye strife seeking
Yestermidnight to my pillow
To my ear her head she bended
"Sleepest thou, O ancient lover
What she poured into our goblet,
With the topers' wine she served us
If unto a sage a night-draught
Infidel to love the man were
Go, O pietist, and rail not
But this boon to us allotted
O how many a repentance,
Of the wine-cup and the love-ling's

Warm with wine and laughing-eyed,
Raiment rent and shift awried;
And her lip a-frolicking,
Came and sat she by my side.
And with soft, complaining voice,
Mine, or dost thou wake?" she sighed.
That we quaffed, unheeding if
Or with heaven's nectar plied.
Such as this the fates vouchsafe,
Who to worship wine denied!
At us wine-bibbers; for they
In creation's morning-tide.

•

Like to HAFIZ' the laugh
Knotted locks have nullified!

*John Payne*

*In the original rhyme scheme.*

## IN PRAISE OF HIS LOVE

*by Hafiz*

Of the love of her my heart the holy place is;
Mirror-holder this my eye unto her face is.

I that bow not down to this world nor the other,
See, my neck beneath the burden of her grace is.

Thou the Touba,[1] I the shape of the beloved;
Each man's way of thought according to his case is.

In that sanctuary what am I, where the zephyr
Curtain-holder of her honour's altar-space is?

Skirt-polluted an I be, what matter? Witness
To her purity the whole world, good and base, is.

Past and gone is Majnun's time and now our turn 'tis:
Every mortal's turn in this our world five days is.[2]

Love's dominion, mirth its treasure, all I joy in,
In her happy fortune's auspice hath its basis.

Nay, what matter if my heart and I should perish?
Since her weal the only object of our chase is.

Never empty may my eye be of her image,
For its apple her especial privy place is!

Every newborn rose, the meadows that adorneth,
Of the loved one's scent and color but the trace is.

Heed his seeming poortith not, for HAFIZ' bosom
All the treasure of the love of her embraces.

*John Payne*

*This translation is in the original rhyme scheme.*

[1] The touba tree grows in Paradise.

[2] The Persians use "five" to mean an indefinite number, just as the Japanese use "eight."

## SONG FROM THE DIWAN

*by Hafiz*

True love has vanished from every heart;
What has befallen all lovers fair?
When did the bonds of friendship part? —
What has befallen the friends that were?
Ah, why are the feet of Khizr lingering? —
The waters of life are no longer clear,
The purple rose has turned pale with fear,
And what has befallen the wind of Spring?

None now sayeth: " A love was mine,
Loyal and wise, to dispel my care."
None remembers love's right divine;
What has befallen all lovers fair?
In the midst of the field, to the players' feet,
The ball of God's favour and mercy came,
But none has leapt forth to renew the game —
What has befallen the horsemen fleet?

Roses have bloomed, yet no bird rejoiced,
No vibrating throat has rung with the tale;
What can have silenced the hundred-voiced?
What has befallen the nightingale?
Heaven's music is hushed, and the planets roll
In silence; has Zohra broken her lute?
There is none to press out the vine's ripe fruit,
And what has befallen the foaming bowl?

A city where kings are but lovers crowned,
A land from the dust of which friendship springs —
Who has laid waste that enchanted ground?
What has befallen the city of kings?
Years have passed since a ruby was won
From the mine of manhood; they labour in vain,
The fleet-footed wind and the quickening rain,
And what has befallen the light of the sun?

HAFIZ, the secret of God's dread task
No man knoweth, in youth or prime
Or in wisest age; of whom wouldst thou ask:
What has befallen the wheels of Time?

*Gertrude Lowthian Bell*

## QUATRAINS
### *by Hafiz*

What made thy locks to curl in such a twisting maze?
Thine eyes so languishing, whence came their dreamy gaze?
Since no one pelted thee with roses, how is it
Thou art so wholly perfumed with their scented sprays?

'Twas Babil taught thine eyes the arts of sorcery;
O God! I vow it ne'er forgets its witchery!
Thy tress's beauty placed the slave-ring in my ear;
May Hafiz' jeweled verse its pearly pendant be.

Drink, drink the wine of love! 'tis everlasting life!
It is the essence of this transitory life!
This is the time for roses, tulips, jovial friends;
One passing hour of bliss enjoy, for this is life.

To drain the wine-cup in the time of youth is best;
To drink their fill is good for all with grief opprest;
The world around us is a ruin desolate;
Better amid such wreck to perish with the rest!

Since man gets nothing from this world's salt, arid plain
But sorrow, and at length sobs out his life in pain,
Happy is he who ne'er was born into the world,
And happy he who quickly leaveth it again.

Embrace me, O my friends, for comrades true are we!
Forget the whirling wheels of time and destiny!
And when my turn shall come, and death shall call me hence,
Drink to my memory! Relate sweet tales of me!

*F. M. Rundall*

## GHAZAL
### *by Hafiz*

If that unkindly Shiraz Turk would take my heart within her hand,
I'd give Bokhara for the mole upon her cheek, or Samarkand!

Saki, what wine is left for me pour, for in heaven thou wilt not see
Musalla's sweet rose-haunted walks, nor Ruknabad's wave-dimpled strand.

Alas! those maids, whose wanton ways such turmoil in our city raise,
Have stolen patience from my heart as spoil is seized by Tartar band.

Our darling's beauty hath, indeed, of our imperfect love no need;
On paint and pigment, patch and line, a lovely face makes no demand.

Of wine and minstrel let us speak, nor fate's dark riddle's answer seek,
Since none hath guessed and none shall guess enigmas none may understand.

That beauty, waxing day by day, of Joseph needs must lead astray
The fair Zulaikha from the veils for modest maids' seclusion planned.

Auspicious youths more highly prize the counsels of the old and wise
Than life itself: then take, O heart, the counsels ready to thy hand!

You spoke me ill; I acquiesced. God pardon you! 'twas for the best;
Yet scarce such bitter answer suits those rubies sugar-sweet and bland!

Your ode you've sung, your pearls you've strung; come, chant it sweetly, HAFIZ mine!
That as you sing the sky may fling the Pleiades' bejeweled band!

*Edward G. Browne*

*This poem is one of the most famous that Hafiz has written, and an amusing story is told in connection with it. When Timur the great Tartar conquered Shiraz he sent for Hafiz and said to him:*

## GHAZAL

*by Hafiz*

That idol with heart of stone and ear-ornaments of silver
Hath deprived me of fortitude, power, and reason.

For she is an image of piercing looks, delicate mien, in beauty like a houri,
A soft companion, bright as the moon, lovely, and robed in the grace-tunic.

Were my very bones even to putrefy,
The love I have for her could not be forgotten by my soul.

Her bosom and shoulders, her bosom and shoulders, her bosom and shoulders
Have deprived me of my heart and religion, my heart and religion:

Thy cure, thy cure, O HAFIZ!
Is her honied lip, her honied lip, her honied lip!

*John Haddon Hindley* (translated 1799)

## ANOTHER GHAZAL

*by Hafiz*

I have borne the anguish of love, which ask me not to describe:
I have tasted the poison of absence, which ask me not to relate.

*"So you are the man who offered to give away my two great cities of Bokhara and Samarkand for a mole on the cheek of your Beloved!"*
*"Yes," replied Hafiz, "and it is through such extravagant generosity as this that I am now reduced to my present state of poverty!" Timur was pleased with the reply and sent Hafiz away with a rich present of gold pieces.*
*The mole, or beauty spot, is considered a great charm by the Persians, as well as by several other Oriental peoples.*

Far through the world have I roved, and at length I have chosen
A sweet creature, a ravisher of hearts, whose name ask me not to disclose.

The flowings of my tears bedew her footsteps
In such a manner as ask me not to utter.

On yesterday night from her own mouth with my own ears I heard
Such words, as pray ask me not to repeat.

Why dost thou bite thy lip at me? What dost thou hint?
I have devoured a lip like a ruby: but whose ask me not to mention.

Absent from thee, and the sole tenant of my cottage,
I have endured such tortures, as ask me not to enumerate.

Thus am I, HAFIZ, arrived at that extremity in the ways of love,
Which, alas! ask me not to explain.

*John Haddon Hindley*

## AT THE GRAVE OF HIS SON

*by Hafiz*

The spring has come! The roses wake from sleep.
My long lost rose, why shouldst thou slumber keep?
I'll weep and weep, like to that radiant cloud,
That with the flowers thou mayest lift the shroud.

*Edna Worthley Underwood*

## MAXIM

*by Hafiz*

For struggle, strife and sorrow, fate made men;
One fights best with the sword, one with the pen.

*Edna Worthley Underwood*

## MAXIMS

*by Hafiz*

1

Harm no one; otherwise do all thou wilt:
My statutes recognize no other guilt.

2

Who sows not love, nor gathers beauty's rose,
Keeps watch o'er tulips while a storm-wind blows.

3

Plant thou the tree of friendship only;
so shall thy heart's desire bear fruit.
Uproot thou hatred's plant completely,
or woes unnumbered thence may shoot.

*Herman Bicknell*

## FROM THE DIWAN

*by Hafiz*

1

High heart, O Hafiz! though not thine
Fine gold and silver ore;
More worth to thee the gift of song,
And the clear insight more.

2

. . . All day the rain
Bathed the dark hyacinths in vain,
The flood may pour from morn till night
Nor wash the pretty Indians white.

3

I know this perilous love-lane
No whither the traveler leads,
Yet my fancy the sweet scent of
Thy tangled tresses feeds.

In the midnight of thy locks,
I renounce the day;
In the ring of thy rose-lips,
My heart forgets to pray.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*
from the German of *von Hammer-Purgstall*

## FROM THE TALE OF "SALAMAN AND ABSAL"
### *by Jami* (1414–1492 A.D.)

I

A Story

From the solitary desert
Up to Baghdad came a simple
Arab; there amid the rout
Grew bewildered of the countless
People, hither, thither, running,
Coming, going, meeting, parting,
Clamor, clatter, and confusion,
All about him and about.

Travel-wearied, hubbub-dizzy,
Would the simple Arab fain
Get to sleep — "But then, on waking,
"How," quoth he, "amid so many
"Waking, know myself again?"

*Jami, who died the year Columbus sailed for America, is the last of the classic poets of Persia. He wrote many sorts of poetry, the most popular being his stories in verse.*

So, to make the matter certain,
Strung a gourd about his ankle,
And, into a corner creeping,
Baghdad and himself and people
Soon were blotted from his brain.

But one that heard him and divined
His purpose, slily crept behind;
From the sleeper's ankle clipping,
Round his own the pumpkin tied,
And laid him down to sleep beside.

By and by the Arab, waking,
Looks directly for his signal —
Sees it on another's ankle —
Cries aloud, " Oh, good-for-nothing
" Rascal to perplex me so!
" That by you I am bewildered,
" Whether I be I or no!
" If I — the pumpkin why on you?
" If you — then where am I, and who? "

*Edward FitzGerald*

2

THE POET TAKES COUNSEL WITH HIMSELF

And yet, how long, O Jami, stringing verse,
Pearl after pearl, on that old harp of thine?
Year after year attuning some new song,
The breath of some old story? Life is gone,
And that last song is not the last; my soul
Is spent — and still a story to be told!
And I, whose back is crooked as the harp
I still keep tuning through the night till day!
That harp untuned by time — the harper's hand
Shaking with age — how shall the harper's hand
Repair its cunning, and the sweet old harp
Be modulated as of old? Methinks

'Twere time to break and cast it in the fire;
The vain old harp, that, breathing from its strings
No music more to charm the ears of men,
May, from its scented ashes, as it burns,
Breathe resignation to the harper's soul,
Now that his body looks to dissolution.

*Edward FitzGerald*

3

Of Salaman

When night came, that releases man from toil,
He played the chess of social intercourse;
Prepared his banquet-hall like Paradise,
Summoned his houri-faced musicians,
And when his brain grew warm with wine, the veil
Flung off him of reserve: taking a harp,
Between its dry string and his finger quick
Struck fire: or catching up a lute, as if
A child for chastisement, would pinch its ear
To wailing that should agéd eyes make weep,
Now like the nightingale he sang alone;
Now with another lip to lip; and now
Together blending voice and instrument;
And thus with his associates night he spent.

*Edward FitzGerald*

4

Salaman Comes to the Sea

Six days Salaman on the camel rode,
. . . and on the seventh
He halted on the seashore; on the shore
Of a great sea that, reaching like a floor
Of rolling firmament below the sky's,
From Kaf to Kaf, to Gau and Mahi down
Descended, and its stars were living eyes.
The face of it was as it were a range
Of moving mountains; or a countless host

Of camels trooping tumultuously up,
Host over host, and foaming at the lip.
Within, innumerable glittering things
Sharp as cut jewels, to the sharpest eye
Scarce visible, hither and thither slipping,
As silver scissors slice a blue brocade.

*Edward FitzGerald*

## FRAGMENTS FROM THE TALE OF "YUSUF AND ZULAIKHA"

*by Jami*

### I

### Zulaikha

Her neck was of ivory. Thither drawn,
Came with her tribute to beauty the fawn;
And the rose hung her head at the gleam of the skin
Of shoulders fairer than jasamine.
Her breasts were orbs of a light most pure,
Twin bubbles new-risen from fount Kafur:
Two young pomegranates grown on one spray,
Where bold hope never a finger might lay.

The touchstone itself was proved false when it tried
Her arms' fine silver thrice purified;
But the pearl-pure amulets fastened there
Were the hearts of the holy absorbed in prayer.
The loveliest gave her their souls for rue,
And round the charm their own heartstrings drew.
Her arms filled her sleeves with silver from them
Whose brows are bound with the diadem.

To labor and care her soft hand lent aid,
And to wounded hearts healing unction laid.
Like reed were those taper fingers of hers,
To write on each heart love's characters.

Each nail on those fingers so long and slim
Showed a new moon laid on a full moon's brim,
And her small closed hand made the moon confess
That she never might rival its loveliness.

Two columns fashioned of silver upheld
That beauty which never was paralleled,
And, to make the tale of her charms complete,
They were matched by the shape of her exquisite feet.
Feet so light and elastic no maid might show,
So perfectly fashioned from heel to toe.
If on the eye of a lover she stepped,
Her foot would float on the tear he wept.

*Ralph T. H. Griffith*

2

## Night

A night it was, sweet as the morning of life,
Joy-augmenting like the days of youth!
Fish and fowl rested from motion,
Business drew its foot within the skirt of its garment.
Within this pleasure-house full of varieties
Naught remained open save the eye of the star.

Night — the thief — robbed the sentinel of his understanding,
The bell-ringer stilled the tongue of the bell;
The hound wound its tail round its neck like a collar,
And in that collar stifled its baying;
The bird of night drew out its sword-like feathers,
And cut off its tuneful reed from its morning song;
The watchman on the dome of the royal palace
Saw in imagination the drowsy poppyhead,
And no longer retained the power of wakefulness;
The image of that poppyhead called him into slumber.
The drummer no longer beat his tymbal,
His hand could no longer hold to the drumstick.
The Muezzin from the minaret no longer cried, "Allah! Allah!
the ever-living!"

Roll up your mattresses, ye nightly-dead, and neglect not prayer!
Zulaikha, of the sugar-lips, was enjoying the sweet slumber . . .

*S. Robinson*

### 3
### Sorrow Comes to Zulaikha

My gentle fortune hath turned to harshness;
The morning splendour of my star is dimmed with misfortune.
I planted date-palms — they have come up brambles;
I scattered the seeds of love — their produce is affliction.
I had hoped from my rose-garden to gather roses —
My garment is pierced with the prick of their thorns.
I am a thirsty man amidst the sands of the desert,
Who hurrieth about on every side in search of water;
My tongue, through dryness, cleaveth to my lips,
My lips are bleeding with the feverish pustules.
Suddenly I seem to see water in the distance:
I hurry towards it, stumbling and rising,
I find in the hollow, in the place of water —
From the glare of the flashing sun — a sandy salt plain!

*S. Robinson*

## COUPLET
### *by Jami*

Love is a secret which cannot be revealed,
But by two hundred curtains it cannot be concealed.

*An anonymous translator*

## BOAST NOT
### *by Jami*

Boast not of having no pride, because it is more invisible
Than the mark of an ant's foot on a black rock in a dark night;
Think it not easy to extirpate it from thy heart
For it is more easy to root up a mountain from the earth with a needle.

*An anonymous translator*

# "INDIAN SUMMER"

## FROM "BURNING AND MELTING"

*by Mohammed Riza Nau'i (died 1610 A.D.)*

*This poem, the "Suz-u-Gudaz," was written by a Persian poet at the court of the Moghul Emperors in India. It is Persian in language and form, but Indian in subject and mood. It tells the story of two lovers who were parted on their wedding day by the death of the man. The maiden thereupon entered his funeral pyre and "became Sati."*

Then like a ruby, she entered the flames, and gazed on the fire with so ravished a look that the fire was afraid of touching her;
So impatient she was because of her heart's desire, that the heart of the fire became as cold as icy water!
When the blood-spilling fire-flood surged on again and arose in resurrection,
She entered its midst like a strong wind that swept the dust from her face and the smoke from the flames.
The fire to her feet was as roses to her hand, and the flames dyed her feet with the henna of her own blood;
The fire enfolded her with a hundred sighs, in such wise that her body seemed like a taper and the fire like the lantern-screen:
With her heart's blood she cast oil on the fire, and right soon the rue-seed of tears abandoned her.
She asked of the fire the "promise-time" of her well-beloved, and eagerly looked for and expected the effulgence of his meeting;
The fire made answer through her heart's own secret, that *it* was her guide to Kawthar.
As soon as she learnt the way, she went forward to him at once, and cast away her veil to kiss him,
She laid his broken head on her knees and kissed his lips and put her face to his face;
With her lashes she swept the flames from his hair, and with her blood she washed the smoke of the fire from his face.
She embraced him more nearly than her soul, and when she had found her well-beloved, she gave up her life to him.

The fire embraced her close as she would, like a drunken man who grips his cup:
Sweetly it crumpled her body together and crushed her, as the wine-bibber folds the roasted meat.
When her body was fire-engulfed, it turned to flame, and the flame to smoke:
By grace of the fire, her visage grew fresh as a rose-bud, and every spikenard twig was a tree of shelter to her.
A thousand waves of fire found their way to her veins and sinews, while the cream of her heart was wholly mixed with her friend's:
Her body was like a jar of wine in full effervescence and agitation, while her tongue became quiet as the vessel's rim:
She plunged in the midst of the flames like a salamander, and all her limbs were gleeds of fire.
The fire burned up every atom of her body, that the smoke did not even pass from her heart to the tongue;
Withal was her tongue the parrot of the praise of Love, and her heart the nightingale of the rose.
While thus she burned there poured upon her from every side the arrows of onlookers' glances:
Twice had she lifted her head from the breast of the moon-fair bridegroom, like an orb from a fiery shoulder,
A thousand flames were mixed with her hair, like the sun of fiery face on the judgment day:
She looked on every hand with a smiling face, her glance was more burning than the lightning of a sigh,
She lifted her head from the depths of the fire, and plunged her life in its dews.
Because of the heat her body was turned to ashes, and the flames died down, and the ashes of her were as fragrant as musk:
Indeed, far purer than the essence of Kafur was a handful of ashes from that most light corse:
Like the soul, she became single from the cares of the body, and with fire she was made as pure as the body of Being.
She was made free and pure from the body of clay and water; she mingled her flames with the satin of repentance:
From every blemish she made herself wholly free, yea, the fire washed white the dress of her beautiful life.

Freed was she from this vain existence, and graciously was she accepted in the eternal life:
Dying once, she was saved from a hundred heart-sorrows, and no sooner was she freed from herself than she was joined with her friend.

*Mirza Y. Dawud* and *Ananda K. Coomaraswamy*

## LAMENT

*by the Moghul Princess Zeb-un-Nissa ("The Hidden One")*

(1639-1689 A.D.)

O idle arms,
Never the lost Beloved have ye caressed:
Better that ye were broken than like this
Empty and cold eternally to rest.

O useless eyes,
Never the lost Beloved for all these years
Have ye beheld: better that ye were blind
Than dimmed thus by my unavailing tears.

O foolish springs,
That bring not the Beloved to my abode;
Yea, all the friends of youth have gone from me,
Each has set out on his appointed road.

O fading rose,
Dying unseen as hidden thou wert born;
So my heart's blossom fallen in the dust
Was ne'er ordained His turban to adorn.

*Magan Lal* and *Jessie Duncan Westbrook*

## LAMENT

*by Zeb-un-Nissa*

Within my bosom stirs once more to-night
A voice of song. Love, erstwhile slumbering,

Intones his mystery, and the flowers of spring
Relive and bloom. Winter, forbear to smite
My heart's late flowers. Listen! From left and right
Through the green boughs the bulbul's note is heard,
And, wing-clipt and imprisoned, my heart's bird
Flutters against his barriers, wild for flight.

*Paul Whalley*

*Japan*

# *The Poetry of Japan*

JAPANESE POETRY makes greater demands upon the reader than any other poetry in the world. It demands that the reader be not merely a sympathetic, but passive instrument on which the poet may play, but an active collaborator. To read Japanese poetry and to get pleasure from it requires an outlay of emotional energy not far short of that required for the writing of it. In this way it becomes a sort of touchstone. If a reader has nothing to contribute to this poetry, it has little or nothing to give him.

The reason for this lies in its extreme condensation, and in its belief in suggestion. In its flower it is content to supply the merest hint, the faintest outline of its inherent content, leaving the completion of the picture to the sensitive reader. Its condensation sharpens at best into a single point of blue flame beside which other poetry seems over-expansive and long-winded.

The poetry of this people whose "great genius lies in little things" cannot be understood if it is read in the slack and chilly mood in which we often approach verse. It must be read as we read the Greek anthologies, the poetry most nearly allied to it.

In most races the poet is willing to take his reader as he finds him, fresh from dinner perhaps, or with his mind still half preoccupied with his other affairs. The poet arrests his attention with the first line, leads him on carefully, gradually tightening the mood, till by almost imperceptible degrees the reader has arrived at the state of concentration which the Japanese poet demands in the first place, the state in which every word, every phrase, etches itself on his consciousness as sharply as acid etches metal. In this state a single word sets free a whole range of vibrations, a chorus of overtones, producing that fringe of magic which is the peculiar quality of poetry. Take for instance this *hokku* by Buson,

> Granted this dew-drop world is but
> A dewdrop world — this granted, yet . . .

Surely the pleasant hairdresser who confessed to me that she did not like to read poetry because " it's sort of dry, and it makes me use my brains " would see nothing in this. Yet what a world of experience and reflection, what a sensitive yet courageous attitude towards existence is contained in these few words — for those who can find it.

Yet even for the creative reader of another race Japanese poetry is often hard to follow. It is a commonplace that all poetry loses much in translation, yet I am persuaded that the poetry of Japan is one of the chief sufferers in this regard. In so small a compass and under so great a stress of concentration if a single symbol fails to register the whole is lost. And frequently these symbols do fail, because we have nothing in our national life to correspond with the thing to be conveyed. Take for instance this poem, usually counted by Japanese authorities as the high point in the poetry of Basho, the greatest master of the *hokku*. Literally the words read,

Into the ancient pond
The frog jumps.
Sound of the water!

This, to a western reader, will have at first only a faintly comic ring, since we have for some reason decided that the frog is a comic animal, and the single word " frog " registers so strongly at first that the rest is completely swallowed up in its impact. To the Japanese a frog is not comic, but carries rather a poetic mood. Indeed it has a poetic name in addition to its more common appellation. The poetic name is here used.

Yone Noguchi told me long ago in Tokio what this poem means to an educated Japanese reader. He has I believe also expressed the same idea in other words in his delightful little volume, " The Spirit of Japanese Poetry." " The words 'ancient pond,' " he said, " suggest to us the courtyard of a Buddhist temple or monastery, since these temples usually contain such a pond, enclosed in worn stone, fringed with the sacred lotus. The peace, the mystic contemplation, of such a spot, come over us as we hear them. The air is very still, probably with the stillness that comes at twilight, and in the silence the little 'ping' made by the water as the frog strikes it comes sharply, almost sadly, a tiny accent in the immense quiet and acquiescence of nature. All this, and more, are contained for us in Basho's poem."

Obviously, without such an interpretation, a western reader can gain no clear idea of the poem simply by reading the words. Yet this interpretation shows us vividly how much the Japanese poet leaves to the creative imagination of his reader.

Fortunately for us, however, the world of overtones set free by these tiny themes are often ones with which we also are familiar. This poem by the lady Chiyo, for instance, on her dead child will be understood by any parent the world over,

To-day, how far may he have wandered,
The brave hunter of dragon flies?

Once the reader has granted the premise of these poems he will find that their compactness and completeness give them an almost uncanny faculty of sticking in the memory, and of recurring at unexpected moments, when a longer poem could not make itself felt. I have wondered whether this quality is not one which has consciously or unconsciously moulded the Japanese preference for the form. For poetry is to the Japanese of any walk of life what song is to the Italian peasant, an ever-present factor, a sort of spiritual bread. It permeates his daily life. Everyone, from the peasant to the Emperor, writes poetry as a matter of course, thinks in terms of poetry. In spring, when the Emperor gives out a subject for the great yearly competition, twenty or thirty thousand poems are entered yearly. And as many thousands more are written but not considered by their authors worthy of troubling the authorities. Indeed it would be difficult to find any adult in the country who had *not* written a spring poem. I have myself elicited, with much coaxing, the following creditable effusion from a professional dish-washer,

The great spring of our national life
Is always in our heart.

If the form used were longer and more diffuse such a universal practice would hardly be possible.

Every form has, however, its spiritual dangers, and the danger of the Japanese form is that it tends to degenerate into a mere conceit, the pretty fancy of a vignettist. Many of the poems best known in English are of this type, possibly because they lose less in translation, such as the following,

I thought I saw the fallen leaves
Returning to their branches.
Alas, butterflies were they.

This compactness of form did not at first appear in Japanese poetry. In the early days, when Japan was definitely under Chinese influence, longer forms were used, especially narrative and elegiac. The first great collection, the "Manyoshu," or "Collection of a Myriad Leaves," which appeared about 750 A.D., contains many such. Of the poets who used these forms Hitomaro is indisputably the greatest. Yet even here the *tanka* makes its appearance. Later, as the Japanese developed their own essentially national tendencies, these derived forms tended to disappear. By the time the next anthology, the "Kokinshu" or "Collection of Odes Ancient and Modern," appeared in 905 the longer forms were practically gone, and the third collection, the "Hyaku-Nin-Isshu" or "Single Verses by a Hundred People," which is to Japan much what the "Golden Treasury" is to the English speaking peoples, contains nothing longer than a *tanka*. The *hokku*, which is sometimes called, though rather misleadingly, the "Japanese epigram," developed about the sixteenth century and was brought to its highest flower by Basho, Buson and the lady Chiyo, whose dates range from 1643 to 1783.

The Japanese language has no stress, as French has no stress, and its prosody counts by syllables as the French counts. The *tanka* is a form of thirty-one syllables, arranged in five lines, of which the first and third have five syllables, and the second, fourth and fifth seven syllables. Since I do not find among the accepted translators a poem in the exact form, I give the following which I have written in imitation of a Japanese poem, in order to make the form clear.

It is cold to-night.
The last fold of winter's robe
Trails across the land.
Yet I see a soft green bud
Broidered on the hem of it.

Rhyme is not used, for the reason that every word in Japanese ends in a vowel, and as there are only five vowels, the result would be extremely monotonous.

Yet even this restricted form, though it never died out, proved at times too long and explanatory for the poets. The *hokku* is the first three lines of the *tanka*, from which the last two are omitted.

A word on the *Noh*, the classic drama of Japan, which is written in poetry, and of which an example is included here, may not be amiss. The *Noh* is a highly conventionalized lyric drama, which

reached its flower with Seami in the fifteenth century. It is presented on a specially constructed stage, with a narrow passageway open to the sky between the stage and the audience. The painting on the back-wall, which is all the setting used, invariably represents three pine trees. A raised runway leads the actors from the dressing rooms on to the stage.

The acting is as highly conventionalized as the drama itself. The gestures are absolutely set, and are more like slow dance movements than anything else with which we are familiar in the west. For this reason we sometimes refer to it as the *Noh Dance*. For all the important characters a mask is worn, and all the parts are acted by men. The voice production is as unrealistic as the other factors, the words being chanted in a manner purposely unintelligible even to a Japanese unless the listener is familiar with them. The result is, to our western eyes and ears, at once unutterably strange, exotic and melancholy — and of a profound and moving beauty.

One word more is perhaps due Mr. Arthur Waley. The translations by him given here are not presented by him as poetry, but as literal translations, and are given in a textbook on the Japanese language. Yet many of them seem to me so essentially poetry in the larger sense that I could not omit them.

## FROM THE "KOJIKI," OR "RECORD OF ANCIENT MATTERS"

*712* A.D.

### HIS AUGUSTNESS THE DEITY-OF-EIGHT-THOUSAND-SPEARS SINGS

*by an Unknown Author*

I take and carefully attire myself
In my garments black as the jewels of the moor;
Like the birds of the offing I look at my breast,
I find these are not good,
And cast them off on the waves of the beach.
I take and carefully attire myself
In my garments green as a kingfisher;
Like the birds of the offing I look at my breast,
I find these too are not good,
And cast them off on the waves of the beach.
I take and carefully attire myself
In my raiment dyed in the sap of the dye-tree,
The pounded madder sought in the mountain fields;
Like the birds of the offing I look at my breast,
I find they are good.
My dear younger sister,[1] Thine Augustness!
Though thou say thou wilt not weep,
If, like the flocking birds, I fly and depart,
If, like the led birds, I am led and depart,
Thou wilt hang down thy head
Like a single eulalia upon the mountain;
Thy weeping shall indeed rise
As the mist of the morning shower,
Thine Augustness, my spouse young like young herbs!

*Yone Noguchi*

[1] Japanese poets frequently use sister to mean the beloved.

FROM THE

# "MANYOSHU," OR COLLECTION OF A MYRIAD LEAVES"

*750* A.D.

## LAY ON THE OCCASION OF THE ENSHRINEMENT OF THE PRINCESS ASUKA ON MOUNT KINOHE

*by Kakinomoto Hitomaro (died 737* A.D.)

Of Asuka's river
(of morning bird-flights minding)
the upper waters
mid bridging rocks swirl on,
the lower waters
rush rough log-bridges under.
There river-tresses
upon the rocks cling firmly,
wilt and renew
and drift and sway forever,
upon the timbers,
that bear the feet across,
the streamy tangle
in long abundance groweth,
wilting, renewing,
and drifting, swaying ever —

*Hitomaro is the greatest of the older poets of Japan. Little however is known of his life beyond the statement in the official annals that he died in the year 737* A.D. *He is thought to have been of noble birth but low rank, and seems to have accompanied the train of some feudal lord in journeys to the provinces. Many legends surround his name.*

Alas how happ'd it!
As watery tresses graceful
e'er was my lady,
as streamy tangle graceful,
e'er was my lady,
or stood she straight and slender,
or lay she idly
her slim limbs on the matting —
Was it her lord
forgat some morning duty,
or night watch broke,
her lord beloved and comely!
While quick her days were
in time of spring fair flow'rs
to deck their heads,
red sprays in time of autumn
to deck their heads,
amid the wildwoods sought they,
their fine-stuff sleeves
together touching roamed they
the hills around,
with eyes as bright as mirrors
in tireless joyance
on spring and autumn gazed they
the orbèd moon
still rounder growing watch'd they,
the Princess and her lover —

On Kinohe
(of royal drink that mindeth)
a shrine is builded,
where she shall rest forever.
All ended now
their multitudinous
words and glances ended.
Long hath he sorrowed
and all his days are weary
like nuye bird
unmated left and desolate,
like restless wild-fowl

that flutter in the morning
he wand'reth, wond'reth,
beneath his misery drooping
like summer grasses,
like even's star uncertain
his steps are wayward.
His heart like ship at sea toss'd
with sorrow heaveth,
no solace ever
for his woesome soul he findeth,
nor any help
to him may come, come ever.
Her name and story
shall ever move to pity,
while earth and heaven
endure the tale shall sadden,
and her fair name,
to Asuka's stream that answereth,
to the end of time
shall the winding waters hallow
him of her beauty minding.

*Frederick Victor Dickins*

## LINES FROM AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE

*by Hitomaro*

Over the far-flung purple moor,
'Mid the white funeral banners borne,
Slowly they take thee, thou who rose
With the wild-fowl at break of dawn.
And they must hide thee far away
As sunset hills hide out the day.
Thy little son, a memory
Of thy dear self, weeps bitter tears,
And seeks for comfort in my arms.
I fondle him, to soothe his fears;
But with a man's unskillful hand,

Lacking the tender touch that cheers.
Our chamber, now so desolate,
Where once so close our pillows lay!
The night is filled with loneliness,
And sorrow darkens all the day. . . .

*Clara A. Walsh*

## TWO POEMS AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE

*by Hitomaro*

1

Through early autumn woods I seek alone
By paths too quickly strewn with gold and red
The hidden forest-ways she wanders on,
Unseen, beyond some turning just ahead.

*Curtis Hidden Page*

2

How sad to gaze upon the shore
Where hand in hand I wandered
With a maiden vanished
As leaves fall from the trees!

*Arthur Waley*

## TANKA

*by Hitomaro*

For my Sister's sake
In plucking with my hand
The plum-blossom of the top branch
I have got wet
With the dew of the lower boughs!

*Arthur Waley*

## ON PRINCE NAGA'S GOING A-HUNTING ON THE MOOR OF KARIJI

*by Hitomaro*

My prince, who rules in peaceful power,
Child of the Sun-orb shining high,
Hath taken his horses and his men
To where the stag and wild-fowl lie.
On wild Kariji's grassy moor
He setteth forth to chase the deer.
As the stag boweth — knees to ground,
So do I, bowing low, revere;
As the quail creepeth through the grass,
I tender service to my Lord,
Lifting my eyes as to the sky,
Sun-bright and shining as a sword —
Eyes like a polished mirror bright,
Loyal and true — reflect the light.
Is he not brave, my Prince! and fair
As the spring blossoms, debonair!

*Clara A. Walsh*

## ON PARTING FROM HIS WIFE

*by Hitomaro*

Not yet, O hill! high hill of autumn, scatter
Red leaves and gold athwart the distant view.
Let me gaze on, a little instant longer,
Where she I love leans towards me through the blue!

*Clara A. Walsh*

## TANKA

*by Hitomaro*

Because, while I kept on trusting,
The nights that you did not come
Had ended by being so many,
I thought I would not wait —
But ended by waiting all the longer!

*Arthur Waley*

## ELEGIAC LINES

*by an Unknown Author*

O ye steeds the Prince of Mino
Stabled in his western stables!
O ye steeds the Prince of Mino
Stabled in his eastern stables!
Is it for your food ye whinny?
Then the fodder I will bring you.
Is it for your drink ye whinny?
Then the water I will bring you.
Wherefore neigh the milk-white chargers?

Ah! methinks these steeds have bosoms,
For their voice is changed and saddened.

*Basil Hall Chamberlain*

## A LAY ON THE EXILE OF OTOMARO NO KYO TO TOSA

*Attributed to the wife of the exile*

My lord of Furu
Isonokami's Highness
from path of duty
seduced by a frail girl's beauty,
cord-bound, a prisoner,

like packhorse led by halter,
like stag by archers
by bowmen set and warded,
for act of treason
'gainst his liege Lord and Sovran,
an exile fareth
to march-land heaven-distant —

Oh, may my lord
the hill of Matsuchi climbing
again behold his homeland.

*Frederick Victor Dickins*

## A TANABATA LAY

### *by an Unknown Author*

*In the Chinese, and the Japanese, heaven the two constellations of the Cowherd and the Weaver Woman are separated by the Milky Way. Legend says that they are lovers and that only once a year, on the seventh night of the seventh moon, they may cross to one another. On this night a bridge is made for them by magpies joining their wings together. This poem is an invitation by one of the god-stars to the other.*

Along the channel
of the river of sunbright heaven
the upper waters
by a precious bridge are spann'd;
'tis the lower waters
a boat bear floating on them.
So if it raineth
and with the rain wind bloweth,
and if it bloweth
and with the wind rain raineth,
with garb unwetted
still mayest thou cross to me,
to me by yon fine bridge cross!

*Frederick Victor Dickins*

## LINES FROM AN ELEGY

*by an Unknown Author*

"In autumn," spake he, "I will come again,
Dear Mother!" But that autumn is forgot;
And days roll by, and moons do wax and wane,
And still they watch, and still he cometh not.

For he ne'er lighted on that distant shore,
Though far he sailed from fair Yamato's lea;
But on this cragged rock forevermore
He dwells among the islands of the sea.

*Basil Hall Chamberlain*

## TANKA

*by an Unknown Author*

Blossoms of the plum
Gleam through fallen snow to-day.
Better let them stand!
I had gathered some for you —
But they melted in my hand.

*Eunice Tietjens*

## TWO TANKA

*by Sukune Yakamochi (died 785 A.D.)*

I

These meetings in dreams,
How sad they are!
When, waking up startled
One gropes about —
And there is no contact to the hand.

*Yakamochi was the editor of the "Collection of a Myriad Leaves."*

2

By way of pretext
I said,
"I will go and look
At the condition of the bamboo fence";
But it was really to see you!

*Arthur Waley*

## ON THE DEATH OF HIS CHILD
*by Yamagami no Okura* (660–733 A.D.)

Because he is so young
And will not know the way to go,
Would I could bribe
The messenger of the underworld
That on his shoulders he might carry him!

*Arthur Waley*

## RECOLLECTIONS OF MY CHILDREN
*by Okura*

Ne'er a melon can I eat,
But calls to mind my children dear;
Ne'er a chestnut crisp and sweet,
But makes the loved ones seem more near.
Whence did they come my life to cheer?
Before my eyes they seem to sweep,
So that I may not even sleep.

*Basil Hall Chamberlain*

## THREE TANKA

*by Yamanobe Akahito (about 730 A.D.)*

1

The men of valour
Have gone to the honourable hunt:
The ladies
Are trailing their red petticoats
Over the clean sea-beach.

*Arthur Waley*

2

Love which is greater than oneself
Is like the glow-worm,
A thing impossible to hide
Even though you wrap it up.

*Arthur Waley*

3

On the beach at Waka bay,
When the tide begins to rise,
A covey of cranes is driven away
Among the reeds with wild, sad cries.

*J. Ingram Bryan*

## ON ASCENDING TO THE MOOR OF ASUKA

*by Akahito*

Upon Mikasa
(of royal cap reminding)
by cloudy Kasuka,
Where springtime bringeth mist,
morn after morn still

*Akahito is another of the great early poets of whom practically nothing is known, except that he was an official at the court of the Emperor.*

the kaho bird doth twitter,
with heart a-drifting
like clouds that hover flutt'ring
unmated sitteth.
So I each morn unmated,
and all the day through,
and every night the night through,
am filled with sorrow,
for that with thee I am not
whom daylong nightlong love I.

*Frederick Victor Dickins*

## MOONLIGHT

*by the lady Ishikawa (eighth century* A.D.)

How the great moon crushes the cloud!
How its witchlike glimmer
Weaves webs that shroud
Now the sea, now the land,
Now every grain of the great sea's sand,
Till like gems they shimmer and shimmer!

*Edna Worthley Underwood*

## SONG

*by Mikata no Sami*

What longing fills my heart
When at the meeting of the ways that tread
The shadow of orange-trees
I meet not with my love!

*Arthur Waley*

## TANKA

*by an Unknown Author*

Only because you smiled on me
With a smile like the lily that grows
In the grass-clump by the road-side
Am I to call you wife?

*Arthur Waley*

## FROM THE "KOKINSHU," OR "COLLECTION OF ODES ANCIENT AND MODERN"

*905* A.D.

### TANKA

*by Ki no Tsurayuki* (883–946 A.D.)

"Naught is so fleeting as the cherry-flower,"
You say . . . yet I remember well the hour
When life's bloom withered at one spoken word —
And not a breath of wind had stirred.

*Curtis Hidden Page*

O love! who gave thee thy superfluous name?
Loving and dying — is it not the same?

*Basil Hall Chamberlain*

### THE CRY OF THE CRANE

*by Tsurayuki*

Its cry is mournful
In the reed-plain,
As though it had called to mind
Something which it wanted
To forget.

*Arthur Waley*

## ASTRAY

*by Tsurayuki*

To gather simples on the hills, I took
The mountain path upon an April day,
But o'er the earth the laughing cherries shook
Such snow of blossom that I lost my way.

*Shotaro Kimura* and *Charlotte M. A. Peake*

## IN THE FACE OF DEATH

*by Arihara no Narihira* (825–880 A.D.)

Of some unknown to-morrow, well I knew
That I must tread the universal way.
Yet did I never know, to feel it true,
That that to-morrow e'er could be to-day.

*Curtis Hidden Page*

## AN ORANGE SLEEVE

*by Narihira*

In the fifth month,
When orange trees
Fill all the world with scent,
I think of the sleeve
Of a girl who loved me.

*Edward Powys Mathers*

*Tsurayuki was the chief compiler of the "Collection of Odes Ancient and Modern." He was a pure lyricist, and has been called "The Japanese Keats."*

*Narihira is often called the Don Juan of old Japan. He lived an adventurous life, long banished from court because, so the story goes, he loved the empress.*

## CHANGE

*by Narihira*

O moon, where art thou?
Thou art no more!
O spring, where art thou,
Thou spring of yore?
All, all are gone: I seek in vain:
'Tis I alone unchanged remain!

*J. Ingram Bryan*

## A WASTED SPRING

*by Yoruka (ninth century)*

I have so long been sick, I cannot tell
What path the spring has taken; yet I fear
That long ago the cherry blossom fell
For which my eyes had waited all the year.

*Shotaro Kimura* and *Charlotte M. A. Peake*

## TWO TANKA

*by Unknown Authors*

1

Hoping all the time
That we should meet
In my dreams —
I spent the whole night
Without being able to sleep.

*Arthur Waley*

2

Even for the space of a flash
Of lightning
That flashes over the corn-ears
Of an autumn field —
Can I forget you?

*Arthur Waley*

## FLOWERLESS FIELDS

*by an Unknown Author*

Ah! if the dear beguilement of the spring
Could touch all lives alike, I should not know
The haunting sorrow that her pleasures bring.
Not in all fields, alas! will flowers grow.

*Shotaro Kimura* and *Charlotte M. A. Peake*

## REMINISCENCE

*by the priest Sosei*

Passionate music of the nightingale,
Not joy you bring me, but a strange regret,
A memory of nothingness, the pale
Face of a lover I have never met.

*Shotaro Kimura* and *Charlotte M. A. Peak*

## AN AUTUMN CRY

*by Sarumaru (about* 800 A.D.)

Far in the mountain deeps
A stag is crying;
Lo, he treads and leaps,
O'er dead leaves flying;
O, who can hear his lonely voice
And then in autumn time rejoice?

*J. Ingram Bryan*

*This poem, and the four following, are of the same period as "Odes Ancient and Modern," but are not in the collection.*

## THE BUOY OF NANIVA

*by Motoyosi (died 940 A.D.)*

Like the buoy that floats in the harbour,
Now high and now dropping low,
Is my heart that love has tortured
When I watch you come and go.

*Edna Worthley Underwood*

## TANKA

*by the lady Sagami (about 1000 A.D.)*

The under leaves of the lespedeza
When the dew is gathering
Must be cold:
On the autumn moor
The young deer are crying.

*Arthur Waley*

## LOST

*by the warrior Tadanori (about 1185 A.D.)*

Belated, and my pathway lost,
I will take lodging here, beneath this tree.
So shall the mountain cherry-blossoms be
To-night mine host.

*Curtis Hidden Page*

*This poem was written by the young warrior when, his clan having been defeated by a rival clan, he was forced to retreat to a far province. Later, the story goes, he risked his life by returning secretly to Kyoto to visit his master in poetry, and begged the master to include one of his poems in the forthcoming official anthology. When the master promised, though he had to include it as anonymous for political reasons, Tadanori exclaimed: "Now it matters not though my body lie in the open field, or float on the waves of the western sea. I have no more to ask."*

## TANKA

*by an Unknown Author*

Many paths there be
To reach the mountain's height.
But all who climb there, see
The same moon's light.

*Curtis Hidden Page*

## FROM THE HYAKU-NIN-ISSHU" OR "SINGLE VERSES BY A HUNDRED PEOPLE"

*1235* A. D.

*This collection is in Japanese what the "Golden Treasury" is in English — and more. Everyone knows it by heart, and each poem has been many times illustrated by artists.*

### SEVEN TANKA

1

*by Toru Minamoto (died* 949 A.D.)

Ah! why does love distract my thoughts,
Disordering my will!
I'm like the pattern on the cloth
Of Michinoku hill —
All in confusion still.

*William N. Porter*

2

*by Princess Ise (about* 890 A.D.)

Short as the joints of bamboo reeds
That grow beside the sea
On pebble beach at Naniwa,
I hope the time may be
When thou'rt away from me.

*William N. Porter*

3

*by Asa-Tada (died* 961 A.D.)

To fall in love with womankind
Is my unlucky fate;
If only it were otherwise
I might appreciate
Some men, whom now I hate!

*William N. Porter*

4

*by Daini no Sammi*

As fickle as the mountain gusts
That on the moor I've met,
'Twere best to think no more of thee,
And let thee go. But yet
I never can forget.

*William N. Porter*

5

*by the lady Akazome Emon (about* 1000 A.D.)

Waiting and hoping for thy step,
Sleepless in bed I lie,
All through the night, until the moon,
Leaving her post on high,
Slips sidewise down the sky.

*William N. Porter*

6

*by the lady Horikawa (about* 1150 A.D.)

Will he be true to me?
That I do not know.
But since the dawn
I have had as much disorder in my thoughts
As in my black hair.

*Edward Powys Mathers*

*Daini no Sammi was the daughter of the famous novelist Murasaki Shikibu, who died about* 1031 A.D.

7

*by the lady Sanuki* (*died* 1165 A. D.)

My sleeve is wet with floods of tears
As here I sit and cry;
'Tis wetter than a low-tide rock —
No one, howe'er he try
Can find a spot that's dry!

*William N. Porter*

## POETS REPRESENTED IN THE "HUNDRED PEOPLE"

### WHITE CHRYSANTHEMUM

*by Mitsune (beginning of ninth century)*

It was a white chrysanthemum
I came to take to-day;
But which are colored, which are white,
I'm half afraid to say,
So thick the frost to-day!

*William N. Porter*

*From "Single Verses by a Hundred People."*

### SORROW

*by Mitsune*

I never wished to see your face, new year,
And yet you come as new years came before
A woman died, whose lovely lips and dear,
Most dear, dark eyes I shall behold no more.

*Shotaro Kimura* and *Charlotte M. A. Peake*

### TWO POEMS

*by Mitsune*

I

Saddle your steed and mount it now.
Homeward with speed, O! we know how!

*Mitsune, who was born a peasant, was one of the editors of the "Odes Ancient and Modern."*

The road that the gentlest zephyr takes —
Home! — Home! — where the spring awakes!

*Edna Worthley Underwood*

2

Soon the mighty storm wind's raging,
Fruit and leaves will be its prey,
Flowers unpetaled meet their fate.
If you love a flower, take it,
Since tomorrow 'tis too late.

*Edna Worthley Underwood*

## TANKA WRITTEN ON HER DEATH BED

*by Lady Izumi (Shikibu) (end of tenth century)*

Once more come to me,
For my life is ebbing fast.
On the further shore
I would keep your memory.
Come to me once more!

*Eunice Tietjens*

*From "Single Verses by a Hundred People"*

## THREE TANKA FROM HER DIARY

*by Lady Izumi (Shikibu)*

1

I am a drop of dew
Hanging from a leaf.
Yet I am not unrestful,
For on this branch I seem to have existed
From before the birth of the world.

*Izumi, who was a learned Buddhist scholar as well as a poet, spent most of her life at court. She was one of the most brilliant figures of her epoch. Shikibu is a title.*

2

Very terrible was the sound of rain . . .
Of what was I thinking
All the long night through
Listening to the rain against the window?

3

I would not exist even for a moment
In a world where sorrows
Follow one another like the joints
In a bamboo stalk.

*Annie Shepley Omori* and *Kochi Doi*

## TANKA

*by Lady Izumi (Shikibu)*

Oh, how long, how long was the night!
And I spent it in passion and tears,
Thinking only of you, of you,
At the night-bird's song, at the dawn and the dew,
Love, how long, how long, was the night!

*Edna Worthley Underwood*

## TANKA

*by Lady Murasaki (Shikibu) (about* 978–1031 A.D.)

I wandered out this moonlight night,
I think that some one hurried by,
But ah, the clouds obscured the light . . .
I only heard a wind-blown sigh!

*Gertrude Emerson*

*From "Single Verses by a Hundred People."*

*Murasaki, another brilliant court lady, is better known as a novelist than as a poet.*

## FROM THE FAMOUS NOVEL "THE TALE OF GENJI"

*by Lady Murasaki (Shikibu)*

POEM ACCOMPANYING THE LINE "THE WHITE FROST LIES UPON THE TILES"

How many more of nights shall I
On this lone bed without thee lie?
The flower has left its well-known bed,
And o'er its place the dews are shed.

*Suyematz Kenchio*

## TWO TANKA

*by Sanetomo Minamoto (died 1219 A.D.)*

1

How gladly would I spend life's fleeting day
Watching the little fishing boats
All rowing shoreward up the bay
And warping up their nets with long curved ropes.

*Curtis Hidden Page*

*From "Single Verses by a Hundred People."*

2

BEFORE DEATH

If I should come no more,
Plum-tree beside my door,
Forget not thou the spring,
Faithfully blossoming.

*Curtis Hidden Page*

*Minamoto, when only twenty-seven years old, was murdered on the steps of the temple at Kamakura by his own nephew, a priest of the temple. This poem was composed on the morning he left home to go to his death.*

## REFLECTIONS

*by the Buddhist priest Saigyo Hoshi* (1118–1190 A.D.)

1

Since I am convinced
That reality is in no way
Real,
How am I to admit
That dreams are dreams?

*Arthur Waley*

2

In my boat that goes
Over manifold salt-ways
Towards the open sea,
Faintly I hear
The cry of the first wild goose.

*Arthur Waley*

3

Those ships which left
The same harbour
Side by side
Towards an unknown destination,
Have rowed away from one another.

*Arthur Waley*

4

In this wayside shrine
Does some spirit choose to dwell?
That I do not know.
Yet my heart can worship here
And my tears are free to flow.

*Eunice Tietjens*

*From "Single Verses by a Hundred People."*

## TANKA

*by an Unknown Author*

Ye who are sad, if it should chance that when
Ye thought to leave the fretful world and go
Far up among the silent hills of snow
That there ye found no peace at last — what then?

*Gertrude Emerson*

# THE HOKKU, OF SEVENTEEN SYLLABLES

HOKKU

*by the Shinto priest Arakida Moritake* (1472–1549 A.D.)

I thought I saw the fallen leaves
Returning to their branches:
Alas, butterflies were they.

*Yone Noguchi*

HOKKU

*by the Buddhist priest Yamazaki Sokan* (1465–1553 A.D.)

But for its voice, the heron were
A line of snow, and nothing more.

*Basil Hall Chamberlain*

HOKKU

*by Ransetsu* (1654–1707 A.D.)

So cold I cannot sleep; and as
I cannot sleep, I'm colder still.

*Basil Hall Chamberlain*

HOKKU

*by Basho* (1643–1694 A.D.)

I

A stem of grass, whereon in vain
A dragon fly essayed to light!

*Basho is one of the two greatest names in Japanese poetry, the other being Hitomaro. He was the most distinguished master of the* hokku

2

ON A BATTLE-FIELD

Haply the summer grasses are
A relic of the warrior's dream.

3

The year has closed while still I wear
My sandals and my pilgrim's hat.

4

Coming this mountain way, no herb
Is lovelier than the violet.

5

She wraps up rice-cakes, while one hand
Restrains the hair upon her brow.

6

The end of autumn, and some rooks
Are perched upon a withered branch.

*Basil Hall Chamberlain*

## TEN HOKKU

*by Basho*

1

Quick-falling dew,
Ah, let me cleanse in you
This wretched life.

---

*form and his brief verses are held in profound reverence by his countrymen. He was a Samurai, who in his youth renounced the life of rank to become a wanderer — a pilgrim priest of the Zen sect of Buddhism. He lived a blameless, almost a saintly life, honoured and revered wherever he passed. His influence on later Japanese poetry and thought has been enormous.*

2

Nine times I've risen to watch
The moon, yet by its light
'Tis but the second quarter of the night.

3

To-night the summer moon is at its best. . . .
Therefore we thank the clouds that sometimes come
To give our necks a bit of rest.

*Curtis Hidden Page*

4

The morning breezes sigh,
A single goose sails idly past
Across the cloudy sky.

5

The breeze across the plain
Has waved the wild bush clover, but
The dewdrops still remain.

6

A wayside cherry tree
Is to a weary pilgrim like
A restful lullaby.

7

Alas! My fire is out,
And there's a shadow on the wall —
A visitor, no doubt.

*William N. Porter*

8

On a withered branch
A crow is sitting
This autumn eve.

9

The cry of the cicada
Gives no sign
That presently it will die.

*W. G. Aston*

10

Being tired —
Ah, the time I fall into the inn —
The wistaria flowers.

*Yone Noguchi*

## POEM BEFORE DEATH

*by Basho*

Lying ill on a journey,
Ah, my dreams
Run about the ruin of fields!

*Yone Noguchi*

## THREE HOKKU

*by the lady Kaga no Chiyo* (1703–1775 A.D.)

All things that seem
Are but
One dreamer's dream.

### Wedded

The persimmon, lo!
No one can tell till he tastes it!
Marriage is even so.

### Widowed

I sleep . . . I wake . . .
How wide
The bed with none beside.

*Curtis Hidden Page*

*Chiyo was the most famous of the women poets of Japan.*

## TWO HOKKU

*by the lady Kaga no Chiyo*

The well-bucket taken away
By the morning glory —
Alas, water to beg!

*Yone Noguchi*

### On Her Dead Child

To-day, how far may he have wandered,
The brave hunter of dragon flies?

## SEVEN HOKKU

*by the painter Buson* (1716–1783 A.D.)

1

Granted this dew-drop world is but
A dew-drop world — this granted, yet . . .

2

A shower in spring, where an umbrella
And rain-coat walk along conversing.

3

How distant on the fallen leaves
His footstep sounds for whom I wait!

*Basil Hall Chamberlain*

4

Oh, how cool —
The sound of the bell
That leaves the bell itself.

5

The night of the spring —
Oh, between the eve
And the dawn!

*Yone Noguchi*

6

So thick the dew to-night,
In vain the traveller attempts
To keep his fire alight.

7

A breeze blows o'er the lake;
Against the heron's slender legs
The little ripples break.

*William N. Porter*

## HOKKU

*by Izembo (died 1710 A.D.)*

My girl, your worldly vanities are like
A snowstorm falling. Sweep it as you will,
Your doorstep's always white with tradesmen's bills!

*Arthur Lloyd*

## HOKKU

*by the painter Boncho (about 1730 A.D.)*

A single river, stretching far
Across the moorland swathed in snow.

*Basil Hall Chamberlain*

## FOUR HOKKU

*by Unknown Authors*

I

How cool the air! and through a shower
The radiance of the setting sun.

2

A troop of sea-gulls, and a gust
Offshore that breaks their whirling flight.

3

The fishmonger — oh, call him back!
But he has vanished in the hail.

4

November, with a butcher bird
Perched on a post on the open moor.

*Basil Hall Chamberlain*

# FOLK-SONGS

## THREE FOLK-SONGS
## (12*th century*)

1

The hat you loved, the damask trimmed reed-hat
Has fallen, fallen!
Into Kamo River, into the middle of the river.
And while I searched and while I sought
Day dawned, day dawned.
Oh, the rustling, rustling of that autumn night by the pools!

2

Like the rattan-whip
That the headsman of the mountain
Wears fastened at his thigh,
To the limbs of one that should love me
Would that I were pressed!

3

Dance, dance, Mr. Snail!
If you won't I shall leave you
For the little horse
To tread under his hoof,
To trample to bits.
But if quite prettily
You dance your dance
To a garden of flowers
I will carry you to play.

*Arthur Waley*

## FOLK-SONGS IN HOKKU FORM

1

Things never changed since the Time of the Gods:
The flowing of water, the Way of Love.

2

Thinking to-morrow remains, thou heart's frail flower-of-cherry,
How knowest whether this night the tempest will not come?

3

All things change, we are told, in this world of change and sorrow;
But love's way never changes of promising never to change.

4

If with my sleeve I hide the faint colour of the dawning sun —
Then, perhaps, in the morning my love will remain.

*Lafcadio Hearn*

# NOH

## NISHIKIGI

*by Motokiyo*

### I

[*The Noh stage has one set scene for all plays. A conventional form of plot is that the Waki or subsidiary character shall go a journey and meet with some* genius loci *or some returning spirit. In* Nishikigi (*Love-wands, or Charm-sticks*) *the Waki is journeying near Mount Shinobu and meets the ghosts of two lovers.*]

### *Part First*

WAKI, A PRIEST. There never was anybody heard of Mt. Shinobu but had a kindly feeling for it; so I, like any other priest that might want to know a little bit about each one of the provinces, may as well be walking up here, along the much travelled road.

I have not yet been about the east country, but now I have set my mind to go as far as the earth goes, and why shouldn't I, after all? — seeing that I go about with my heart set upon no particular place whatsoever, and with no other man's flag in my hand, no more than a cloud has! It is a flag of the night I see coming down upon me. I wonder now, would the sea be that way, or the little place Kefu that they say is stuck down against it.

SHITE AND TSURE. [*The ghosts of two lovers long dead, and not yet really united.*] Times out of mind am I here setting up this bright branch, this silky wood with the charms painted in it as fine as the weave you'd get in the grass-cloth of Shinobu, that they'd be still selling you in this mountain.

SHITE. [*To Tsure.*] Tangled, we are entangled. Whose fault was it, dear? Tangled up as the grass patterns are tangled up in

this coarse cloth, or as the little Mushi that lives on and chirrups in dried seaweed. We do not know where are to-day our tears in the undergrowth of this eternal wilderness. We neither wake nor sleep, and passing our nights in a sorrow, which is in the end a vision, what are these scenes of spring to us? This thinking in sleep of some one who has no thought of you, is it more than a dream? And yet surely it is the natural way of love. In our hearts there is much and in our bodies nothing, and we do nothing at all, and only the waters of the river of tears flow quickly.

CHORUS

Narrow is the cloth of Kefu, but wild is that river, that torrent of the hills, between the beloved and the bride.
The cloth she had woven is faded, the thousand one hundred nights were night-trysts watched out in vain.

WAKI. [*Not recognizing the nature of the speakers.*] Strange indeed, seeing these town-people here.
They seem like man and wife,
And the lady seems to be holding something
Like a cloth woven of feathers,
While he has a staff or a wooden scepter
Beautifully ornate.
Both of these things are strange;
In any case, I wonder what they call them.

TSURE. [*The woman.*] As for this, it is but a narrow cloth called hosonuno;
It is just the breadth of the loom.

SHITE. [*The man.*] As for this, it is merely wood painted,
And for both of these things this place is famous.
Would you be wishing to buy them?

WAKI. Indeed, indeed, as for the cloths of this place and the lacquers, they are famous things that I have already had opportunity to hear about, and yet I still wonder why they have such great reputation.

TSURE. Ah, well now, that's a disappointment. Here they say perfectly for the wood "Nishikigi" and "Hosonuno" for the woven stuff, and yet you come saying that you have never heard why, and never heard the story. Is it reasonable?

SHITE. No, no, that is reasonable enough. What can people be

expected to know of these affairs when it is more than they can do to keep abreast of their own?

BOTH. [*To the Priest.*] Ah well, you look like a person who has abandoned the world; it is reasonable enough that you should not know the worth of wands and cloths, with love's signs painted upon them, with love's marks painted and dyed.

WAKI. That is a fine answer. So you would tell me that Nishikigi and Hosonuno are names bound over with love?

SHITE. They are names in love's list surely. Every day for a year — for three years come to their full — were wands, Nishikigi, set up, until there were a thousand in all. And they are in song in your time, and will be. "Chidzuka" they call them.

TSURE. These names are surely a byword.
As the cloth hosonuno is narrow of weft,
More narrow than the breast,
We say it of any love
Whose breasts are hard to come nigh to.
It is a name in books of love.

SHITE. 'Tis a sad name to look back on.

TSURE. A thousand wands were in vain.
A sad name, set in a story!

SHITE. A seed pod void of the seed,
We had no meeting together.

TSURE. Let him read out the story.

CHORUS

I

At last they forget, they forget.
The wands are no longer offered,
The custom is faded away.
The narrow cloth of Kefu
Will not meet over the breast.
'Tis the story of Hosonuno,
This is the tale:
These bodies, having no weft,
Even now are not come together.
Truly a shameful story!
A tale to bring shame on the gods.

II

Ah names of love,
Now for a little spell,
For a faint charm only,
For a charm as slight as the binding together
Of pine-flakes in Iwashiro,
And wishing over them toward the sunset,
We return, and return to our lodging.

The evening sun leaves a shadow.

WAKI. Ah, go on, tell out all of the story.

SHITE. It is an old custom of this country that we make wands of mediation, and deck them with symbols, and set them before a gate, when we are suitors.

TSURE. And we take up a wand of one we would meet with, and let the others lie, for a hundred nights it may be, or for a thousand nights in three years, till there are a thousand wands here in the shade of this mountain.

And here is the funeral cave of such a man, who had watched out the thousand nights — a bright cave, for they have buried him with all his wands. The wand-cave they call it.

WAKI. I will go to that love-cave;
It will be a tale to take back to my village.
Will you show me my way there?

SHITE. So be it, I will teach you the path.

TSURE. Tell him to come to this side.

BOTH. Here are the pair of them
Going along before the traveler.

CHORUS

We have spent the whole day until dusk
Pushing aside the grass
From the over-grown way at Kefu.
Where, indeed, is the love-cave?

O you man, cutting grass on the hill,
Please set your mind on this matter.

"You'd be asking where the dew is
"While the frost's lying here on the road.
"Who'd tell you that now? "

Be that as you will, yet we are in earnest.

SHITE. There's a cold feel in the autumn.
Night comes.

CHORUS

And storms; trees, giving up their leaf,
Spotted with sudden showers!
Autumn! Our feet are clogged
In the dew-drenched, entangled leaves.
The perpetual shadow is lonely,
The mountain shadow is lying alone.
The owl cries out from the ivies
That drag their weight on the pine.

Among the orchids and chrysanthemum flowers
The hiding fox is now lord of that love-cave,
Nishidzuka,
That is dyed like the maple's leaf.

They have left us this thing for a saying.
That pair have gone into the cave.
[*Sign for the exit of Shite and Tsure.*]

## *Part Second*

[*The Waki has taken the posture of sleep. His respectful visit to the cave is beginning to have its effect.*]

WAKI. [*Restless.*] It seems that I cannot sleep
For the length of a pricket's horn —
Under October wind, under pines, under night!
I will perform voice-service to Butsu.

TSURE. Aïe! honored priest,
You do not dip in one river

Beneath the same tree's shadow
Without bonds in some other life.

Hear soothsay,
Now is there meeting between us,
Between us who were until now
In life and in after-life kept apart.

A dream-bridge over wild grass,
Over the grass I dwell in.
O honored, do not awake me by force.
I see that the law is perfect.

SHITE. [*Supposedly invisible.*] It is a good service you have done, sir,
A service that spreads in two worlds,
And binds up an ancient love
That was stretched out between them.

I had watched for a thousand days.
I give you largess,
For this meeting is under a difficult law.
And now I will show myself, in the form of Nishikigi.
I will come out now for the first time in color.

[*The characters announce or explain their acts, as these are mostly symbolical. From now on comes the final dance which both chorus and the two chief actors are explaining.*]

CHORUS. The three years are over and past —
All that is but an old story.

SHITE. To dream under dream we return.
Three years! . . . And the meeting comes now!
This night has happened over and over,
And only now comes the tryst.

CHORUS. Look there to the cave
Beneath the stems of the Suzuki!
From under the shadows of the love-grass —
See! see how they come forth and appear —
For an instant! . . . Illusion!

SHITE. There is at the root of hell

No distinction between princes and commons!
Wretched for me! 'Tis the saying.

WAKI. Strange! what seemed so very old a cave
Is all glittering-bright within,
Like the flicker of fire.
It is like the inside of a house.
They are setting up a loom
And heaping up charm-sticks. No!
The hangings are out of old time.
Is it illusion? Illusion!

TSURE. Our hearts have been in the dark of the falling snow,
We have been astray in the flurry,
You should tell better than we
How much is illusion —
You who are in the world!
We have been in the whirl of
those who are fading.

SHITE. Indeed in old times Narihira said —
And as he vanished with the years —
"Let a man who is in the world tell the fact."
It is for you, traveller,
To say how much is illusion.

WAKI. Let it be a dream, or a vision,
Or what you will, I care not.
Only show me the old times over-past and snowed under!
Now! Soon! While the night lasts!

SHITE. Look sharp then, for old times are shown.
Faint as the shadow-flower shows in the grass that bears it,
And you've but a moon for lanthorn.

TSURE. The woman has gone into the cave.
She sets up her loom there
For the weaving of hosonuno,
Thin as the heart of Autumn.

SHITE. The suitor for his part, holding his charm-sticks,
Knocks on a gate which was barred.

TSURE. In old time he got back no answer,
No secret sound at all
Save . . .

SHITE. The sound of the loom.

TSURE. It was a sweet sound like katydids and crickets —

A thin sound, like the Autumn.
SHITE. It was what you would hear any night.
TSURE. Kiri.
SHITE. Hatari.
TSURE. Cho.
SHITE. Cho.
CHORUS. [*Mimicking the sound of crickets.*]
Kiri, hatari, cho, cho,
Kiri, hatari, cho, cho,
The cricket sews on at his old rags
With all the new grass in the field — sho,
Churr, isho, like the whir of a loom: churr.
CHORUS. [*Antistrophe.*]
Let be, they make grass-cloth in Kefu,
Kefu, the land's end, matchless in the world.
SHITE. That is an old custom, truly,
But this priest would look on the past.
CHORUS. The good priest himself would be saying:
Even if we weave the cloth, hosonuno,
And set up the charm-sticks
For a thousand, a hundred nights,
Even then our beautiful desire will not pass —
Nor fade nor die out.
SHITE. Even to-day the difficulty of our meeting is remembered,
Is remembered in song.

CHORUS

That we may acquire power,
Even in our faith substance,
We will show forth even now.
And though it be but in a dream —
Our form of repentance.
[*Explaining the action.*]
There he is carrying wands
And she has no need to be asked.
See her within the cave,
With a cricket-like noise of weaving.
The grass-gates and the hedge are between them —
That is a symbol.

Night has already come on.
[*Now explaining the thoughts of the man's spirit.*]
Love's thoughts are heaped high within him,
As high as the charm-sticks,
As high as the charm-sticks, once colored,
Now fading, lie heaped in this cave.
And he knows of their fading, he says:
I lie a body, unknown to any other man,
Like old wood buried in moss.
It were a fit thing
That I should stop thinking the love-thoughts.
The charm-sticks fade and decay,
And yet
The rumor of our love
Takes foot and moves through the world.
We had no meeting
But tears have, it seems, brought out a bright blossom
Upon the dyed tree of love.
SHITE. Tell me, could I have foreseen,
Or known what a heap of my writings
Should lie at the end of her shaft-bench?

CHORUS

A hundred nights and more
Of twisting, encumbered sleep
And now they make it a ballad,
Not for one year or for two only
But until the days lie deep
As the sand's depth at Kefu.

Until the year's end is red with autumn,
Red like these love-wands,
A thousand nights are in vain.
I too stand at this gate-side —
You grant no admission, you do not show yourself,
Until I and my sleeves are faded.
By the dew-like gemming of tears upon my sleeve,
Why will you grant no admission?
And we all are doomed to pass,

You, and my sleeves and my tears.
And you did not even know when three years had come to an end.
Cruel, ah cruel!
The charm-sticks . . .

SHITE. Were set up a thousand times.
Then, now, and for always.

CHORUS. Shall I ever at last see into that room of hers which no other sight has traversed?

SHITE. Happy at last and well-starred!
Now comes the eve of betrothal —
We meet for the wine-cup.

CHORUS. How glorious the sleeves of the dance
That are like snow-whirls!

SHITE. Tread out the dance.

CHORUS. Tread out the dance and bring music.
This dance is for Nishikigi.

SHITE. This dance is for the evening plays
And for the weaving.

CHORUS. For the tokens between lover and lover!
It is a reflecting in the wine-cup.

CHORUS

Ari-aki —
The dawn!
Come! we are out of our place —
Let us go ere the light comes!
[*To the Waki.*]
We ask you, do not awake.
We all will wither away.
The wands and this cloth of a dream.
Now you will come out of sleep,
You tread the border and nothing
Awaits you — no, all this will wither away.
There is nothing here but this cave in the field's midst.
To-day's wind moves in the pines.
A wild place, unlit, and unfilled!

*Ernest Fenollosa*

*China*

# *The Poetry of China*

Perhaps the chief characteristic of Chinese poetry is what one might call the quality of being adult. In the whole vast range of its literature there is nothing of that jejune, almost adolescent quality which is the underside of European poetry, and crops out in the minor works of all but our greatest masters. Even in the dawn of antiquity, when Confucius collected the "Book of Odes" in 500 B.C., the Chinese were already an old race, wise, tolerant, patient. Their poetry, in spite of the great complexity of its verse-forms, has that fine casualness which comes to the human spirit which has contemplated life long and directly, and found it — what it is.

Yet the Chinese — rather contrary to the cursory opinion in the west — are not a profoundly spiritual people. Their wisdom, their tolerance, their patience, are of the objective variety, which is perhaps the reason they appeal so strongly to the objective west. Compared with their subjective neighbor India they have no religious poetry of any importance. Even the philosophy of their great mystic Lao-Tzu has had little influence on the race spirit, except, with the imported Buddhism, to strengthen their natural acceptance and passivity. It is the sage Confucius, with his practical wisdom, who governs their poetry, as he governs their lives.

Chinese poetry, in addition to being almost invariably objective, is equally invariably occasional, that is the poems are not built up formally and abstractly, as so much English poetry is, but are comment on some particular fact or situation, like the chance that the poet is looking at a river, or visiting his friends. The great genius of the race lies in the fact that their observation, their humanity and their wisdom play over the particular details given with so vivid a light that the whole is illumined with an almost unearthly poignancy.

Another striking thing about this poetry is the almost complete

absence, after the very early days, of poems dealing with the love of man for woman, though the love of woman for man is a theme much used, especially the love of the deserted or cast-off wife or concubine. Arthur Waley, in his "170 Chinese Poems," has so aptly put the psychology of this that I cannot do better than to quote him.

"The most conspicuous feature of European poetry is its preoccupation with love. This is apparent not only in actual 'love-poems,' but in all poetry where the personality of the writer is in any way obtruded. The poet tends to recommend himself in a *romantic* light; in fact, to recommend himself as a lover.

The Chinese poet has a tendency different but analogous. He recommends himself not as a lover, but as a friend. He poses as a person of infinite leisure (which is what we should most like our friends to possess) and free from worldly ambitions (which constitute the greatest bars to friendship). He would have us think of him as a boon companion, a great drinker of wine, who will not disgrace a social gathering by quitting it sober."

So poems describing with ingratiating gusto the delights of revelry with friends alternate with poems of grief over the absence of these same friends, or poems of the bitterness of parting. Partings and exiles, unfortunately, were all too frequent in early China. Almost all the poets, thanks to the great reverence in which literature was held, were officials; and the chances of imperial favor, the complicated court intrigues, or the many military campaigns, were constantly scattering them to the four corners of the empire.

The reverence for literature as such has always been very deep in China. Among the common people indeed it amounts to a sort of worship of the written word of whatever sort. Our servants in Wusih used carefully to collect any discarded scrap of paper on which anything was written, even my barbarous foreign scrawls, and reverently burn them.

Poetry therefore occupies a position most gratifying to a poet. Until very recently the knowledge of the classic poems, and the ability to produce new ones on the old models, was considered one of the first principles of education. No one might attain to any position of authority, even such an unlikely one as the equivalent of chief of police of the city of Peking, without a profound knowledge of poetry — an idea which commends itself heartily to some

of us. Even the common people have by heart a number of the classic poems, and anyone with the slightest pretense to education can chant poems by the half hour, in the curious formal system of intoning which they invariably use in rendering poetry, a system not unlike, I judge from Mr. Yeats, that used by the early Irish bards.

So much has been written recently and is readily available on the history of Chinese poetry by persons much better qualified than I to speak, that the merest outline should be sufficient here.

The poems in the earliest collection, the "Shi-King," or "Book of Odes," which was collected by Confucius about 500 B.C., are for the most part by unknown authors, and have at their best a sweep and a sincerity, often combined with a rugged folk-humor, which is found in the best primitive poetry everywhere. They are written in a simple rhymed verse-form, usually four syllables to the line. Chinese commentators have ascribed all sorts of complicated and allegorical meanings to these odes, just as western scholars of long ago attributed such subterranean profundities to the "Songs of Solomon," but it is sufficient for us of the west to take them on their own merits as remarkably good folk poetry.

Two hundred years after Confucius came the poet-statesman Chü Yüan whose greatest work is a long poem called the "Li Sao," or "Falling into Trouble," describing the difficulties of honesty in a dishonest world, and fraught with much colorful imagination. Under the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to 221 A.D.) some good poetry was written, notably by the Emperor Wu-ti, and the Liang Dynasty (502 to 557 A.D.) furnished a few pleasant songs.

But the great flowering time, the "Golden Age" of Chinese poetry came during the three hundred years of the T'ang Dynasty, from 618 to 907 A.D. Dr. Herbert A. Giles quotes a modern Chinese critic as saying; "Poetry came into being with the 'Odes,' developed with the 'Li Sao,' burst forth and reached perfection under the T'angs." All the greatest names of China's poets are to be found in this period, Tu Fu, whom the Chinese consider probably their greatest poet, Li Po, who runs him a very close second and in the eyes of Europe is perhaps even greater, Wang Wei, Po Chü-i, and a host of minor men. Indeed the "Complete Collection of the Poetry of the T'ang Dynasty" contains 48,900 poems!

At this time the very complex and highly characteristic verse-forms which have been in use ever since were perfected. Yet in spite

of the enormous complexities of these forms, which make them as difficult to write technically as a *villanelle* or a *chant royale*, the great T'ang poets succeeded in producing through them an effect of simplicity and directness which has never been surpassed in any literature. Incontestably T'ang poetry is one of the high spots in the world history of poetry.

After the T'ang the next period of any importance is the Sung Dynasty (960 to 1127 A.D.) from which a number of pleasant, though slighter, songs remain, and in decreasing ratio the Yüan and Ch'ing, though the latter contains the most popular writer of more modern times, Yuan Mei (1715–1797). "Classical allusion," says Arthur Waley pleasantly, "always the vice of Chinese poetry, finally destroyed it altogether."

The subject of Chinese prosody is far too complex to do more than touch on it here. What has been called the "basic unit" of Chinese poetry is a four line stanza of which each line contains either five or seven syllables. This stanza is often used by itself, and is then sometimes called in English the "short-stop," because "the sense should go on though the words stop."

The rules of this stanza are absolutely set, and include not only the rhyme scheme, but also the tonal scheme. The Chinese language, as everyone knows, uses a number of different tones, among which four are generally recognized, the "low and even" tone, the "sharp and ascending" tone, the "clear and far-reaching" tone, and the "straight and abruptly finished" tone. For the purpose of prosody the "low and even" tone is called *ping*, and the three others are included under one head and called *tseh*.

The metric chart of one such stanza, by Ch'en Hao, is as follows.

Tseh tseh ping ping tseh tseh ping
Ping ping tseh tseh tseh ping ping
Ping ping tseh tseh ping ping tseh
Tseh tseh ping ping tseh tseh ping

The first, third and last lines rhyme.

As Chinese is a monosyllabic language, each syllable is a word. Moreover there are no articles, and few prepositions or other connecting words, in the language, and therefore each syllable is a root word. I give a literal, word for word translation of this poem to show the condensation of the original.

Cloud faint wind light near noon sky
Beside flower follow willow cross forward stream
Time man not know my heart joy
Shall say steal leisure learn few-years [1]

This Mr. Alan Simms Lee has rendered into English free verse as follows.

Light clouds, soft winds and a noon sky.
Under the willows I wander among the flowers by the stream.
Men know not the joy that is in my heart;
They say I steal leisure to re-learn the follies of youth.

Finally Louise Hammond has made a version in the original syllabic and rhyme scheme to accompany the Chinese chanting tune, to which allusion was made earlier, so that a clear idea of its form may be had. The curious double stress at the end of the line is an effect practically unknown in English.

Scant clouds just flake the noon sky;
By willowed streamlets stroll I.
But men know not my heart's joy,
And say, "Old fool, the hours fly!"

It will be seen by this that the translator is confronted with the necessity, owing to the almost telegraphic condensation of the language, of rendering either the entire sense but using another form, or of using the form but omitting part of the sense. Most translators have chosen the former.

In the field of English poetry one of the chief events of the last ten or fifteen years has been the appearance of adequate translation of the classic Chinese poets. These beautiful vivid lyrics, written so long ago, yet so instinct with a fundamental humanity which is untouched by the passage of centuries, have taken a strong hold on the imagination of the contemporary poets. Energetically they have set about remedying the chief defect of the older translations, namely that sinologues seldom know much of English poetry, and poets less than seldom know anything of Chinese. So a number of the poets have worked in harness, founding the poetical versions on literal translations made by Chinese or by sinologues. Arthur

[1] "Few-years" is an idiom meaning youth.

Waley, too, has proved himself that rare combination, a sinologue and a poet in one.

The effect of all these, appearing together, has been to give to the old Chinese bards a sort of rebirth in this foreign medium. And it is safe to predict that the English poetry of the next generation will be strongly coloured by this new influence, just as our poetry of an older day was influenced by the poetry of Persia and Arabia.

FROM THE

# "SHI-KING"

# OR "BOOK OF ODES"

*Collected by Confucius about* 500 B.C.

## THE CLOUDY RIVER

*by an Unknown Author* (*about* 800 B.C.)

How the Cloudy River glitters—
Shining, revolving in the sky!
The King spoke:
"Alas! Alas!
What crime have the men of to-day committed
That Heaven sends down upon them
Confusion and death?
The grain does not sprout,
The green harvests wither,
Again and again this happens.
There is no spirit to whom I have not rendered homage,
No sacrifice I have withheld for love.
My stone scepters and round badges of rank have come to an end.
Why have I not been heard?

Already the drought is terrible beyond expression!
The heated air is overpowering; it is a concentrated fierceness.
I have not ceased to offer the pure sacrifices,
I myself have gone from the border altars to the ancestral temples.
To Heaven,
To Earth,
I have made the proper offerings,
I have buried them in the ground.

There is no spirit I have not honored,
Hou Chi could do no more.
Shang Ti does not look favorably upon us.
This waste and ruin of the earth —
If my body alone might endure it!

Already the drought is terrible beyond expression!
I cannot evade the responsibility of it.
I am afraid — afraid; I feel in peril — I feel in peril,
As when one hears the clap of thunder and the roll of thunder.
Of the remnant of the black-haired people of Chou
There will not be left so much as half a man.
Ruler over the high, wide Heavens,
Even I shall not be spared.
Why should I not be terrified
Since the ancestral sacrifices will be ended?

Already the drought is terrible beyond expression!
The consequences of it cannot be prevented.
Scorching — scorching!
Blazing — blazing!
No living place is left to me.
The Great Decree of Fate is near its end.
There is none to look up to; none whose counsel I might ask.
The many great officials, the upright men of ancient days,
Cannot advise me in regard to these consequences.
My father, my mother, my remote ancestors,
How can you endure this which has befallen me?

Already the drought is terrible beyond expression!
Parched and scoured the hills, the streams.
Drought, the Demon of Drought, has caused these ravages,
Like a burning fire which consumes everything.
My heart is shriveled with the heat;
Sorrow rises from the heart as smoke from fire.
The many great officials, the upright men of ancient days,
Do not listen to me.
Ruler of the high, wide Heavens,
Permit that I retire to obscurity.

Already the drought is terrible beyond expression!
I strive, and force myself in vain.
I dread that which will come.
How — why — should I bear this madness of drought?
I suffer not to know the reason for it.
I offered the yearly sacrifices for full crops in good time.
I neglected not one of the Spirits of the Four Quarters of the Earth.
The Ruler of the high, wide Heavens
Does not even consider me.
I have worshiped and reverenced the bright gods,
They should not be dissatisfied or angry with me.

Already the drought is terrible beyond expression!
Everything is in confusion; all authority is gone;
My officials are reduced to extremity.
My Chief Minister is afflicted with a continuing illness.
My Master of the Horse, my Commander of the Guards,
My Steward, my attendants of the Right and of the Left,
Not one among them has failed to try and help the people,
Not one has given up because powerless.
I raise my head and look at the Ruler of the wide, bright Heavens.
I cry: 'Why must I suffer such grief!'

I look upwards. I gaze at the wide, bright Heavens,
There are little stars twinkling, even those stars.
My officers and the great men of my country,
You have wrought sincerely and without gain.
The Great Decree is near its end.
Do not abandon what you have partly accomplished,
Your prayers are not for me alone,
But to guard the people and those who watch over them from calamity.
I look upwards. I gaze at the wide, bright Heavens.
When shall I receive the favor of rest? "

*Florence Ayscough* and *Amy Lowell*

## HOME

*by an Unknown Author*

Great trees in the south
Give me no shelter,
And women loitering by the Han
Leave me cold.

O Han too deep for diving,
O Kiang too long for poling!

Faggots, brambles,
I cut them with a will —
But those girls facing home,
I should like to feed their horses.

O Han too deep for diving,
O Kiang too long for poling!

Faggots, artemisia,
I cut them with a will —
But those girls facing home,
I should like to feed their colts.

O Han too deep for diving,
O Kiang too long for poling!

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## THE SACRIFICE

*by an Unknown Author* (*about* 1114 B.C.)

We load the sacrificial stands
Of wood and earthen ware,
The smell of burning southernwood
Is heavy in the air.

It was our fathers' sacrifice,
It may be they were eased.
We know no harm to come of it;
It may be God is pleased.

*Helen Waddell,*
after *James Legge*

## LONELINESS

*by an Unknown Author (about* 1121 B.C.)

White clouds are in the sky.
Great shoulders of the hills
Between us two must lie.
The road is rough and far.
Deep fords between us are.
I pray you not to die.

*Helen Waddell,*
after *James Legge*

## FRAGMENT OF A POEM

*by Duke Wu of Wei* (780 B.C.)

When first the guests approach the mats
Their manners are correct;
And even when they well have drunk,
They still are circumspect.

But when the guests have drunk too much,
They lose sobriety;
They shout and brawl and loudly sing,
— An impropriety.

If when a guest has drunk too much
He courteously depart,
His host and he would happy be,
Each having done his part.

But to remain when one is drunk
Is not a virtuous thing.
To drinking, though a custom good,
One must deportment bring.

*Helen Waddell,*
after *James Legge*

## A COMPLAINT

### *by the lady Chwang Këang* (718 B.C.)

The wind blows from the north.
He looks and his eyes are cold.
He looks and smiles and then goes forth,
My grief grows old.

The wind blows and the dust.
To-morrow he swears he will come.
His words are kind, but he breaks his trust,
My heart is numb.

All day the wind blew strong,
The sun was buried deep.
I have thought of him so long, so long,
I cannot sleep.

The clouds are black with night,
The thunder brings no rain.
I wake and there is no light,
I bear my pain.

*Helen Waddell,*
after *James Legge*

## BARONESS MUH OF HEU COMPLAINS

### *by an Unknown Author* (675 B.C.)

I would have gone to my lord in his need,
Have galloped there all the way,
But this is a matter concerns the state,
And I, being a woman, must stay.

I watched them leaving the palace yard,
In carriage and robe of state.
I would have gone by the hills and the fords;
I know they will come too late.

I may walk in the garden and gather
Lilies of mother-of-pearl.
I had a plan would have saved the state.
— But mine are the thoughts of a girl.

The Elder Statesmen sit on the mats,
And wrangle through half the day;
A hundred plans they have drafted and dropped,
And mine was the only way.

*Helen Waddell,*
*after James Legge*

## THE BROKEN ASSIGNATION

*by an Unknown Author* (826 B.C.)

The willows by the Eastern Gate
Are deep in sheltering leaves.
You said " Before the night grows late,"
— There's twittering in the eaves.

The willows by the Eastern Gate
All night in shadow are.
You said " Before the night grows late,"
— There shines the morning star.

*Helen Waddell,*
*after James Legge*

## IN THE SPRING

*by an Unknown Author*

In the wild there is a dead antelope,
And it is wrapped up with the white grass.
There is a young lady with thoughts natural to the spring.
And a fine gentleman would lead her astray.

In the forest there are the scrubby oaks;
In the wild there is a dead deer,
And it is bound round with the white grass.
There is a young lady like a gem.

She says, " Slowly; gently, gently;
Do not move my handkerchief;
Do not make my dog bark."

*James Legge*

## A STANZA OF COMMENT

*by an Unknown Author*

There in the oozy grounds of the Hwun
They gather the sorrel.
That officer
Is elegant beyond measure.
He is elegant beyond measure
But, perhaps, he is not what the superintendent
of the ruler's carriages ought to be.

*James Legge*

## PROTEST

*by an Unknown Author* (*about* 866 B.C.)

My mind is not a stone —
It cannot be rolled about.
My mind is not a mat —
It cannot be rolled up.
My deportment has been dignified and good,
With nothing wrong that can be pointed out.

*James Legge*

## ANXIETY OF A YOUNG LADY TO GET MARRIED

*by an Unknown Author*

Ripe, the plums fall from the bough:
Only seven tenths left there now!
Ye whose hearts on me are set,
Now the time is fortunate!

Ripe, the plums fall from the bough;
Only three tenths left there now!
Ye who wish my love to gain,
Will not now apply in vain!

No more plums upon the bough!
All are in my basket now!
Ye who me with ardor seek,
Need the word but freely speak!

*James Legge*

## COMPARISONS

*by an Unknown Author*

How do we hew our axes' helves?
Not without axes, sure, themselves.
What if to take a wife we mean?
Hopeless, save with a go-between.

As in the hewing of helves, of helves,
Not far off are the types themselves,
Haply have I my lady met,
So in the feast is order set!

*William Jennings*

## LONGING

*by an Unknown Author*

He's there, the dolichos among!
Only one day from sight away —
To me it seems as three months long!

He's there, among the southernwood!
Only one day from sight away —
It seems three seasons' solitude!

Among the mugwort he appears!
Only one day from sight away —
To me it seems as three full years!

*James Legge*

## ADVICE

*by an Unknown Author*

Push not the cart you stand behind —
You'll only raise the dust. Nor dwell
On your anxieties of mind —
You'll only make yourself unwell.

Push not the cart you stand behind —
The dust will only blind your view.
Dwell not on things that vex your mind —
You never thus can see them true.

Push not the cart you stand behind —
The dust will but becloud your eyes.
Heed not the troubles of your mind —
'Twill weight you as you seek to rise.

*James Legge*

## WHEN THE PRINCE IS OUT HUNTING

*by an Unknown Author*

Lacking you,
Town has no folk.
Has it no folk?
None like my lord,
Handsome and true.

While you chase,
No one can drink.
Can no one drink?
None, O my lord,
With equal grace.

You away,
No one can ride.
Can no one ride?
None like my lord,
Valiant and gay.

*Louise Strong Hammond*

*This translation is in the original syllabic and rhyme scheme.*

## THE SOLDIERS' COMPLAINT

*by an Unknown Author*

Oh woe! Oh woe!
Why not go?
Because of you
We are drenched with dew.

Oh woe! Oh woe!
Why not go?
For you, O Sire,
We are deep in mire.

*Louise Strong Hammond*

*In the original syllabic and rhyme scheme.*

## TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN

*by an Unknown Author (about* 740 B.C.)

Don't come in, sir, please!
Don't break my willow trees!
Not that *that* would very much grieve me;
But alack-a-day! what would my parents say?
And love you as I may,
I cannot bear to think what that would be.

Don't cross my wall, sir, please!
Don't spoil my mulberry trees!
Not that *that* would very much grieve me;
But alack-a-day! what would my brothers say?
And love you as I may,
I cannot bear to think what that would be.

Keep outside, sir, please!
Don't spoil my sandal trees!
Not that *that* would very much grieve me;
But alack-a-day! what the world would say!
And love you as I may,
I cannot bear to think what that would be.

*Herbert A. Giles*

# CHOU DYNASTY TO LIANG DYNASTY

*1122* B.C. *to 557* A.D.

## BATTLE

*by Ch'ü Yüan* (332–295 B.C.)

"We grasp our battle-spears: we don our breastplates of hide.
The axles of our chariots touch: our short swords meet.
Standards obscure the sun: the foe roll up like clouds.
Arrows fall thick: the warriors press forward.
They menace our ranks: they break our line.
The left-hand trace-horse is dead: the one on the right is smitten.
The fallen horses block our wheels: they impede the yoke-horses!"

They grasp their jade drumsticks: they beat the sounding drums.
Heaven decrees their fall: the dread powers are angry.

The warriors are all dead: they lie on the moor-field.
They issued but shall not enter: they went but shall not return.
The plains are flat and wide: the way home is long.

Their swords lie beside them: their black bows, in their hand.
Though their limbs were torn, their hearts could not be repressed.
They were more than brave: they were inspired with the spirit of "Wu." [1]
Steadfast to the end, they could not be daunted.
Their bodies were stricken, but their souls have taken immortality —
Captains among the ghosts, heroes among the dead.

*Arthur Waley*

*Ch'ü Yüan was the famous statesman who drowned himself in the river Mi-lo. The modern Dragon Boat Festival perpetuates his memory.*

[1] Military genius.

## FRAGMENT FROM THE "LI SAO" OR "FALLING INTO TROUBLE"

*by Ch'ü Yüan*

Ling-fan, whose oracle was favorable to me,
Chose a fortunate day for my departure.
He broke a branch of the ch'iung tree for my food;
Like rice he boiled it for my nourishment.

He yoked for me a team of flying dragons;
With jade and with ivory he adorned my chariot.
How could I dwell in peace with hearts estranged from my own?
I would go far away. I would keep myself apart.

I turned my course towards the mountains of K'wan-lun;
Long was the way and far and wide did I wander.
Clouds of many colors floated like banners above my head,
And "ping, ping," rang the jade bells of my harness.

In the morning I started from the Ford of Heaven,
And in the evening I reached the uttermost West.
The mated phoenixes greeted me, floating like flags,
In mutual harmony soaring and hovering.

Suddenly I was crossing over the Moving Sands,
And following gaily the banks of the Red River.
I motioned to the dragons to form a bridge for me,
And I prayed the Western Emperor to carry me across.

Long was the way and difficult the going.
I sent my chariots up before me, by narrow ways, to wait for one another,
While I went up by Pu-chau hill, and turned me to the left.
And I appointed the Western Sea for our meeting place.

I collected my chariots, a thousand in number.
Their linchpins were of jade, and they raced on together.
To each were yoked eight dragons, with snake-like motions gliding,
And the banners of colored cloud floated above our heads.

Nevertheless I paused, and I moderated my haste,
Though my spirit rose afar, racing like a horse of mettle.
I sang the Nine Songs, I danced the dance of Shun,
Spending a long day in the refreshment of pleasure

I ascended then into the luminous glory of the sky
And suddenly, looking down slantwise, I saw my old home.
My charioteer lamented; my chargers drooped with sorrow.
My heart was shaken; long I looked down, and went no farther.

Therefore I say, "It is the end." In the whole kingdom
There is no one, there is no man who knows me.
Why should I still keep thinking of my old country?
Since I am not thought fit to govern justly
I will follow P'ang Hsien to the place where he is.

*Eunice Tietjens,*
after *James Legge* and the French of *d'Hervey de Saint-Denys*

## LI FU-JEN

*by the Emperor Wu-ti* (157–87 B.C.)

The sound of her silk skirt has stopped.
On the marble pavement dust grows.
Her empty room is cold and still.
Fallen leaves are piled against the doors.
Longing for that lovely lady
How can I bring my aching heart to rest?

*Arthur Waley*

## OLD AND NEW

*by an Unknown Author* (*first century* B.C.)

She went up the mountain to pluck wild herbs;
She came down the mountain and met her former husband.
She knelt down and asked her former husband
"What do you find your new wife like?"
"My new wife, although her talk is clever,

Cannot charm me as my old wife could.
In beauty of face there is not much to choose,
But in usefulness they are not at all alike.
My new wife comes in from the road to meet me;
My old wife always came down from her tower.
My new wife is clever at embroidering silk;
My old wife was good at plain sewing.
Of silk embroidery one can do an inch a day;
Of plain sewing, more than five feet.
Putting her silks by the side of your sewing,
I see that the new will not compare with the old."

*Arthur Waley*

## COCK-CROW SONG

*by an Unknown Author (first century* B.C.)

In the eastern quarter dawn breaks, the stars flicker pale.
The morning cock at Ju-nan mounts the wall and crows.
The songs are over, the clock run down, but still the feast is set.
The moon grows dim and the stars are few; morning has come to the world.
At a thousand gates and ten thousand doors the fish-shaped keys turn;
Round the palace and up by the castle, the crows and magpies are flying.

*Arthur Waley*

## SHANG YA

*by an Unknown Author (first century* B.C.)

Shang Ya!
I want to be your friend
For ever and ever without break or decay.
When the hills are all flat
And the rivers are all dry,
When it lightnings and thunders in winter,
When it rains and snows in summer,
When Heaven and Earth mingle —
Not till then will I part from you.

*Arthur Waley*

## ANCIENT SAYING

*by Meo Yung (about* 120 A.D.)

He who has seen little
Is easily astonished.
He sees a camel and exclaims:
"A horse with a swollen back!"

*Alan Simms Lee*

## THE COCK-FIGHT

*by Ts'ao Chih* (192–233 A.D.)

Our wandering eyes are sated with the dancer's skill,
Our ears are weary with the sound of "kung" and "shang."[1]
Our host is silent and sits doing nothing:
All the guests go on to places of amusement.

. . . . . .

On long benches the sportsmen sit ranged
Round a cleared room, watching the fighting-cocks.
The gallant birds are all in battle-trim:
They raise their tails and flap defiantly.
Their beating wings stir the calm air:
Their angry eyes gleam with a red light.
Where their beaks have struck, the fine feathers are scattered:
With their strong talons they wound again and again.
Their long cries enter the blue clouds;
Their flapping wings tirelessly beat and throb.
"Pray God the lamp-oil lasts a little longer,
Then I shall not leave without winning the match!"

*Arthur Waley*

[1] Notes of the scale.

## BEARER'S SONG

### *by Miu Hsi* (*died* 245 A.D.)

When I was alive, I wandered in the streets of the capital:
Now that I am dead, I am left to lie in the fields.
In the morning I drove out from the High Hall:
In the evening I lodged beneath the Yellow Springs.[1]
When the white sun had sunk in the Western Chasm
I hung up my chariot and rested my four horses.
Now, even the mighty Maker of All
Could not bring the life back to my limbs.
Shape and substance day by day will vanish:
Hair and teeth will gradually fall away.
Forever from of old men have been so:
And none born can escape this thing.

*Arthur Waley*

## THE JEWEL

### *by Wan Tse* (*probably about* 300 A.D.)

On my flute of ebony I played to you the most impassioned songs that I know, but your eyes followed the flight of pigeons and you would not listen.

I gave you a poem in which I praised your beauty, but you tore it up, throwing the pieces on the waters of the lake, because, you said, there were no lotus petals.

I would have given you a wondrous jewel, limpid and cold as a winter's night, but I keep it because it is like your heart.

*Alan Simms Lee*

[1] Hades.

## THE LITTLE LADY OF CH'ING-HSI

(*A children's song*)

*by an Unknown Author*

Her door opened on the white water
Close by the side of the timber bridge:
That's where the little lady lived
All alone without a lover.

*Arthur Waley*

# T'ANG DYNASTY

*618–907* A.D.

## A KING OF TANG

*by Wang Po* (648–676 A.D.)

There looms a lordly pleasure-tower o'er yon dim shore,
Raised by some King of Tang.
Jade pendants at his girdle clashed, and golden bells
Around his chariot rang.

Strange guests through sounding halls at dawn go trailing by,
Gray mists and mocking winds;
And sullen brooding twilights break in rain on rain,
To lash the ragged blinds.

The slow, sun-dappled clouds lean down o'er waters blue,
Clear mirrored one by one;
Then drift as all the world shall drift. The very stars
Their timeless courses run.

How many autumn moons have steeped those palace walls!
And paled the shattered beams!
What is their royal builder now? A lord of dust?
An emperor of dreams?

*L. Cranmer-Byng*

*The "King of Tang" here mentioned is not a king of the T'ang Dynasty — towards the beginning of which this poem was written — but a king of the province of Tang, which is already mentioned in the* Odes *a thousand years earlier.*

## BUSINESS MEN

*By Ch'en Tzu-ang* (656–698 A.D.)

Business men boast of their skill and cunning
But in philosophy they are like little children.
Bragging to each other of successful depredations
They neglect to consider the ultimate fate of the body.
What should they know of the Master of Dark Truth
Who saw the wide world in a jade cup,
By illumined conception got clear of heaven and earth:
On the chariot of mutation entered the gate of immutability?

*Arthur Waley*

## WHAT SHOULD A MAN WANT?

*by Wang Chi* (*about* 700 A.D.)

"Tell me now, what should a man want
But to sit alone sipping his cup of wine?"
I should like to have visitors come to discuss philosophy
And not to have tax-collectors coming to collect taxes;
My three sons married into good families,
My five daughters provided with steady husbands;
Then I could jog through a happy five score years,
Craving no cloud-ascent, no resurrection.

*Arthur Waley*

## ANSWERING VICE-PREFECT CHANG

*by Wang Wei* (699–759 A.D.)

As the years go by, give me but peace,
Freedom from ten thousand matters.
I ask myself and always answer,
What can be better than coming home?
A wind from the pine-trees blows my sash,
And my lute is bright with the mountain-moon.
You ask me about good and evil? . . .
Hark, on the lake there's a fisherman singing!

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## A VIEW OF THE HAN RIVER

*by Wang Wei*

With its three Hsiang branches it reaches Ch'u border
And with nine streams touches the gateway of Ching:
This river runs beyond heaven and earth,
Where the color of mountains both is and is not.
The dwellings of men seem floating along
On ripples of the distant sky . . .
O Hsiang-yang, how your beautiful days
Make drunken my old mountain-heart!

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## IN MY LODGE AT WANG-CH'UAN AFTER A LONG RAIN

*by Wang Wei*

The woods have stored the rain, and slow comes the smoke
As rice is cooked on faggots and carried to the fields;
Over the quiet marshland flies a white egret,
And mango-birds are singing in the full summer trees.

I have learned to watch in peace the mountain morning-glories,
To eat split dewy sunflower-seeds under a bough of pine,
To yield the place of honour to any boor at all . . .
Why should I frighten sea-gulls even with a thought?

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## THE BEAUTIFUL HSI-SHIH

*by Wang Wei*

Since beauty is honoured all over the empire,
How could Hsi-shih remain humbly at home?

*Wang Wei was equally famous as poet and landscape painter. He was a devout Buddhist, and like most of the T'ang poets, spent the end of his life in seclusion.*

At dawn washing clothes by a lake in Yueh;
At dusk in the palace of Wu, a great lady!
Poor, no rarer than the others —
Exalted, everyone praising her rareness.
But above all honours, the honour was hers
Of blinding with passion an emperor's reason.
Girls who had once washed silk beside her
Now were ordered away from her carriage . . .
Ask them, in her neighbours' houses,
If by wrinkling their brows they can copy her beauty.

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## A SONG OF YOUNG GIRLS FROM LO-YANG

*by Wang Wei*

There are girls from Lo-yang in that door across the street,
Some of them fifteen and some a little older.
While their master rides a rapid horse with jade bit and bridle,
Their handmaid brings them codfish on a golden plate.
On the painted pavilions, facing their red towers,
Cornices are pink and green with peach-bloom and with willow;
Canopies of silk awn their seven-scented chairs;
Rare fans shade them home, to their nine-flowered curtains.
Their lord, with rank and wealth and in the green of life,
Exceeds, for magnificence, even Chi-lun;
He favors girls of lowly birth and teaches them to dance,
And he gives away his coral-trees to almost anyone.
The wind of dawn just stirs when his nine soft lights go out,
Those nine soft lights like petals in a flying chain of flowers.
From play to play they have barely time for singing over the songs;
No sooner are they dressed again than incense burns before them.
Those they know in town are only the rich and the lavish,
And day and night they're visiting the homes of Chao and Li . . .
Who cares about a girl from Yueh, face jade-white,
Humble, poor, alone, by the river, washing silk!

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## EXILE'S LETTER

### *by Li Po* (705–762 A.D.)

So-Kin of Rakuho, ancient friend, I now remember
That you built me a special tavern,
By the south side of the bridge at Ten-Shin.
With yellow gold and white jewels
we paid for the songs and laughter,
And we were drunk for month after month,
forgetting the kings and princes.
Intelligent men came drifting in, from the sea
and from the west border,
And with them, and with you especially,
there was nothing at cross-purpose;
And they made nothing of sea-crossing
or of mountain-crossing
If only they could be of that fellowship.
And we all spoke out our hearts and minds . . .
and without regret.
And then I was sent off to South Wei,
smothered in laurel groves,
And you to the north of Raku-hoku,
Till we had nothing but thoughts and memories between us.
And when separation had come to its worst
We met, and traveled together into Sen-Go
Through all the thirty-six folds of the turning and twisting waters;

*Li Po, also called Li Tai Po, is probably the best known of all the Chinese poets, though his own countrymen count Tu Fu his equal if not his superior. But Li Po's vivid and irrepressible personality has endeared him particularly to the West. He led a wandering life, at times tippling with other poets in a bamboo grove, at times dwelling in luxury at the court of the emperor, at times wandering in exile in far provinces. He could never fit himself into the accepted scheme of life, and tradition says — with perhaps more fantasy than accuracy — that he met his death by trying to embrace the image of the moon in the waters of a lake on which he was floating one evening while drunk.*

Into a valley of a thousand bright flowers . . .
that was the first valley,
And on into ten thousand valleys
full of voices and pine-winds.
With silver harness and reins of gold,
prostrating themselves on the ground,
Out came the East-of-Kan foreman and his company;
And there came also the " True-man " of Shi-yo to meet me,
Playing on a jeweled mouth organ.
In the storied houses of San-Ko they gave us
more Sennin music;
Many instruments, like the sound of young phoenix broods.
And the foreman of Kan-Chu, drunk,
Danced because his long sleeves
Wouldn't keep still, with that music playing.
And I, wrapped in brocade, went to sleep with my head on his lap,
And my spirit so high that it was all over the heavens.

And before the end of the day we were scattered like stars or rain.
I had to be off to So, far away over the waters,
You back to your river-bridge.
And your father, who was brave as a leopard,
Was governor in Hei Shu and put down the barbarian rabble.
And one May he had you send for me, despite the long distance;
And what with broken wheels and so on, I won't say it wasn't hard
going . . .
Over roads twisted like sheep's guts.
And I was still going, late in the year,
in the cutting wind from the north,
And thinking how little you cared for the cost . . .
and you caring enough to pay it.
Then what a reception!
Red jade cups, food well set, on a blue jeweled table;
And I was drunk, and had no thought of returning;
And you would walk out with me to the western corner of the castle,
To the dynastic temple, with the water about it clear as blue jade,
With boats floating, and the sound of mouth-organs and drums,
With ripples like dragon-scales going grass-green on the water,
Pleasure lasting, with courtesans going and coming without hindrance,

With the willow-flakes falling like snow,
And the vermilioned girls getting drunk about sunset,
And the waters a hundred feet deep reflecting green eyebrows —
Eyebrows painted green are a fine sight in young moonlight,
Gracefully painted — and the girls singing back at each other,
Dancing in transparent brocade,
And the wind lifting the song, and interrupting it,
Tossing it up under the clouds.

And all this comes to an end,
And is not again to be met with.
I went up to the court for examination,
Tried Layu's luck, offered the Choyu song,
And got no promotion,
And went back to the East Mountains white-headed.

And once again we met, later, at the South Bridge head.
And then the crowd broke up — you went north to San palace.
And if you ask how I regret that parting?
It is like the flowers falling at spring's end,
confused, whirled in a tangle.
What is the use of talking! And there is no end of talking —
There is no end of things in the heart.

I call in the boy,
Have him sit on his knees to write and seal this,
And I send it a thousand miles, thinking.

*Ezra Pound*,
from the notes of the late *Ernest Fenollosa*, and the decipherings of the *Professors Mori* and *Araga*.

## DRINKING ALONE IN THE MOONLIGHT

*by Li Po*

A pot of wine among flowers.
I alone, drinking, without a companion.
I lift the cup and invite the bright moon.
My shadow opposite certainly makes us three.
But the moon cannot drink,

And my shadow follows the motions of my body in vain.
For the briefest time are the moon and my shadow my companions.
Oh, be joyful! One must make the most of spring.
I sing — the moon walks forward rhythmically;
I dance, and my shadow shatters and becomes confused.
In my waking moments, we are happily blended.
When I am drunk, we are divided from one another and scattered.
For a long time I shall be obliged to wander without intention;
But we will keep our appointment by the far-off Cloudy River.

*Florence Ayscough* and *Amy Lowell*

## A SONG OF CH'ANG-KAN

*by Li Po*

My hair had hardly covered my forehead.
I was picking flowers, playing by my door,
When you, my lover, on a bamboo horse,
Came trotting in circles and throwing green plums.
We lived near together in an alley in Ch'ang-kan,
Both of us young and happy-hearted . . .

At fourteen I became your wife
And was so abashed that I dared not smile
And lowered my head toward a dark corner
And would not turn to your thousand calls.
But at fifteen I straightened my brows and laughed,
Learning that love survives the dust,
And even to my death would have waited by my post
And would never have despaired in the Tower of Silent Watching.

But when I was sixteen, you left on a long journey,
Through the Gorges of Ch'ü-t'ang, of rocks and whirling water.
And then came the Fifth Month, more than I could bear,
And I tried to hear the sound of monkeys high up in the sky.
Your footprints by our door, where I had seen you go,
Were hidden, every one of them, under green moss,
Hidden under moss too deep to sweep away.
And the first autumn wind added falling leaves.

And now, in the Eighth Month, yellowing butterflies
Hover, two by two, in our west-garden grasses.
And, because of all this, my heart is breaking
And I fear for my bright cheeks, lest they fade . . .
Oh, at last, when you return through the three Pa districts,
Send me a message home ahead!
And I will come and meet you and never mind the distance,
All the long way to Ch'ang-feng Sha!

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## HARD TRAVELLING

*by Li Po*

Pure wine costs, for the golden cup, ten thousand cash a flagon
And a jade plate of dainty food calls for a myriad coins.
I cast aside my sticks and cup, I cannot eat nor drink . . .
I pull out my dagger, but all four ways are barred.
I would cross the Yellow River, but ice chokes the ferry,
I would climb the T'ai-hang Mountains, but the sky is blind with snow . . .
I would sit and poise a fishing-pole, lazy by a brook —
But I suddenly dream of riding a boat, sailing for the sun . . .
Journeying is hard,
Journeying is hard.
There are many turnings —
Which am I to follow? . . .
I will mount a long wind some day and break the heavy waves
And set my cloudy sail straight and bridge the deep deep sea.

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## SELF-ABANDONMENT

*by Li Po*

I sat drinking and did not notice the dusk,
Till falling petals filled the folds of my dress.
Drunken I rose and walked to the moonlit stream;
The birds were gone, and men also were few.

*Arthur Waley*

## LADY YANG KUEI-FEI AT THE IMPERIAL FEAST OF THE PEONY

*by Li Po*

*One spring morning when the Emperor Ming Huang, Li Po's patron, was viewing the peonies with his court, and especially with his favorite concubine, the beautiful Yang Kuei-fei, he called suddenly for Li Po. The poet, hastily fetched, proved to be very drunk. Cold water was thrown over him and he was ushered into the imperial presence. There, while two ladies of the imperial harem held before him a screen of pink silk, and the Lady Yang Kuei-fei knelt with his ink slab, he dashed off a series of poems in praise of the beautiful concubine. Unfortunately, however, in one of them he compared Yang Kuei-fei to Flying Swallow, an equally beautiful concubine of the Han Dynasty, who was said to be of so slight a build that she could dance on the palm of the hand. Flying Swallow was noted for her intrigues as well as for her beauty, and an enemy of Li Po persuaded Yang Kuei-fei to take this comparison as an insult. Through her influence the poet was banished from court. For the tragic end of Yang Kuei-fei see "The Never-Ending Wrong" by Po Chü-i.*

She is the flowering branch of the peony,
Richly-laden with honey-dew.
Hers is the charm of the vanished fairy
That broke the heart of the dreamer king
In the old legend of the Cloud and Rain.
Pray, who in the palace of Han
Could be likened unto her,
Save the lady, Flying Swallow, newly-dressed
In all her loveliness.

*Shigeyoshi Obata*

## ANOTHER SONG AT THE FEAST OF THE PEONY

*by Li Po*

Cloud-like garments, flower face,
Lattice which spring breezes trace,
Such are seen on Jade Hill Heights,
Or some moonlit, mystic place.

*Louise Strong Hammond*

## ON HEARING CHÜN, THE BUDDHIST MONK, PLAY HIS LUTE

*by Li Po*

The monk from Shu with his silken-green lute,
Walking west down Eyebrow Mountain,
Brings me by one touch of the strings
The sound of the pines of a thousand valleys.
I hear him in the cleansing brook,
I hear him in the icy bells;
And I feel no change though the mountain darkens
And cloudy autumn heaps the sky.

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## THE CHING-TING MOUNTAIN

*by Li Po*

Flocks of birds have flown high and away;
A solitary drift of cloud, too, has gone, wandering on.
And I sit alone with the Ching-ting Peak, towering beyond.
We never grow tired of each other, the mountain and I.

*Shigeyoshi Obata*

## SORROW OF THE LONG GATE PALACE

*by Li Po*

The glad spring goes unattended
At the laurel bower where sorrow is long;
But on the four walls of gold
The autumn dust clings like grief;
And night holds the bright mirror up in the emerald sky
For the lonely one in the Palace of Long Gate.

*Shigeyoshi Obata*

## A SUMMER DAY

*by Li Po*

Naked I lie in the green forest of summer . . .
Too lazy to wave my white feathered fan.
I hang my cap on a crag,
And bare my head to the wind that comes
Blowing through the pine trees.

*Shigeyoshi Obata*

## ADDRESSED HUMOROUSLY TO TU FU

*by Li Po*

Here! is this you on the top of Fan-ko Mountain,
Wearing a huge hat in the noonday sun?
How thin, how wretchedly thin, you have grown!
You must have been suffering from poetry again.

*Shigeyoshi Obata*

## A LOVE RAPTURE

*by Li Po*

Round the Palace of Waters gently the wind
moves the flowers of the water-lilies.

On the highest terrace of Ku-su one sees
the king of Wu lazily lying.

And before him Hsi-shih, after whom beauty was
named, dances with lovely grace of delicate weak gestures.

Then she laughs that she is so voluptuously weary,
and languidly leans to the east on the white jade of the royal
bed.

*Edward Powys Mathers*

## THE WHITE HERON
### *by Li Po*

That great flake of snow which has just floated
over the lake was a white heron.

Motionless, at the end of a sand bank, the white heron
watches the winter.

*Gertrude Laughlin Joerissen,*
from the French of *Franz Toussaint*

## IN A MIRROR
### *by Li Po*

My whitening hair would make a long long rope,
Yet could not fathom all my depth of woe;
Though how it comes within a mirror's scope
To sprinkle autumn frosts, I do not know.

*Herbert A. Giles*

## BRINGING IN THE WINE
### *by Li Po*

See how the Yellow River's waters move from heaven,
Entering the ocean, never to return!
See how lovely locks in bright mirrors in high chambers,

Though silken black at morning, have turned by night to snow!
O let a man of spirit venture where he pleases
And never tip his golden cup empty towards the moon!
Since heaven gave the talent, let it be employed!
Spin a thousand pieces of silver, all of them come back!
Cook a sheep, kill a cow, whet the appetite,
And make me, of three hundred bowls, one long drink!
To old Master Ts'en
And young Tan-ch'iu
Bring in the wine!
Let your cups never rest!
Let me sing you a song!
Let your ears attend!
What are bell and drum, rare dishes and treasure?
Let me be forever drunk and never come to reason!
Sober men of older days and sages are forgotten,
And only the great drinkers are famous for all time.
Prince Ch'en paid at a banquet in the Palace of Perfection,
Ten thousand coins for a bucket of wine, with many a laugh and quip . . .
Why say, my host, that your money is gone?
Go and buy wine and we'll drink it together!
My flower-spotted horse,
My furs worth a thousand,
Hand them to the boy to exchange for good wine,
And we'll drown away the woe of ten thousand generations!

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## THE PORCELAIN PAVILION

*by Li Po*

Out in the artificial lake
there is a pavilion of green and white porcelain;
it is reached by a bridge of jade,
arched like the back of a tiger.

In the pavilion friends in bright-coloured robes
are drinking cups of cool wine;

they chatter and scribble verses,
their sleeves tucked up,
their hats pushed back.

In the water
where the reflected bridge
seems a crescent of jade,
the friends in bright-coloured robes
are drinking heads downward
in a porcelain pavilion.

*James Whitall,*
from the French of *Judith Gautier*

## SONG ON THE RIVER

*by Li Po*

My boat is of ebony;
the holes in my flute are golden.

As a plant takes out stains from silk,
so wine takes sadness from the heart.

When one has good wine,
a graceful boat,
and a maiden's love,
why envy the immortal gods?

*James Whitall,*
from the French of *Judith Gautier*

## THE THATCHED HOUSE UNROOFED BY AN AUTUMN GALE

*by Tu Fu* (712–770 A.D.)

It is the Eighth Month, the very height of autumn.
The wind rages and roars.
It tears off three layers of my grass-roof.
The thatch flies — it crosses the river — it is scattered about in the open spaces by the river.
High-flying, it hangs, tangled and floating, from the tops of forest trees;

Low-flying, it whirls — turns — and sinks into the hollows of the marsh.
The swarm of small boys from the South Village laugh at me because I am old and feeble.
How dare they act like thieves and robbers before my face,
Openly seizing my thatch and running into my bamboo grove?
My lips are scorched, my mouth dry, I scream at them, but to no purpose.
I return, leaning on my staff. I sigh and breathe heavily.

Presently, of a sudden, the wind ceases. The clouds are the color of ink.
The autumn sky is endless — endless — stretching toward dusk and night.
My old cotton quilt is as cold as iron;
My restless son sleeps a troubled sleep, his moving foot tears the quilt.
Over the head of the bed is a leak. Not a place is dry.
The rain streams and stands like hemp — there is no break in its falling.
Since this misery and confusion, I have scarcely slept or dozed.
All the long night, I am soaking wet. When will the light begin to sift in?
If one could have a great house of one thousand, ten thousand rooms —
A great shelter where all the Empire's shivering scholars could have happy faces —
Not moved by wind or rain, solid as a mountain —
Alas! When shall I see that house standing before my eyes?
Then, although my own hut were destroyed, although I might freeze and die, I should be satisfied.

*Florence Ayscough* and *Amy Lowell*

*Tu Fu, the peer of his friend Li Po as a poet, was of a more serious and contemplative disposition. He also held a position at court for a short while, but found himself unfitted for official life. Later, when, already old, he was wandering in a distant province, he was marooned for ten days on an island by a flood. When he was finally rescued the local mandarin gave a feast in his honour, at which Tu Fu ate so much that, in his weakened condition, he could not support it, and died of the effects.*

## A VIEW OF T'AI-SHAN

*by Tu Fu*

What shall I say of the Great Peak?
The ancient Dukedoms are everywhere green,
Inspired and stirred by the breath of Creation;
With the Twin Forces balancing day and night,
I open my breast toward widening clouds,
And I strain my sight after birds flying home . . .
When shall I climb to the top and hold
All mountains in a single glance!

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## BIDDING GENERAL YEN FAREWELL AT FENG-CHI STATION

*by Tu Fu*

This is where your comrade leaves you,
Turning at the foot of these purple mountains . . .
When shall we pledge with cups again
As we did last night and walk in the moon?
The landscape is murmuring farewell
To a man so honoured through three reigns;
And back I must go to my river-village,
Into the final solitude.

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## WITH HER BEAUTY

*by Tu Fu*

Lovelier than all the rest,
But living alone in an empty valley,
She says that she came from an excellent clan
Which is humbled now among grasses and tree-trunks . . .

When trouble arose in the Küan district,
Her brothers and close kin were killed.
What use were their high offices,
Not even saving their own lives!
The world has but scorn for adversity;
And hope goes out, like the light of a candle.
Her husband, with a vagrant heart,
Finds a new love like a new piece of jade;
And when morning-glories furl at night
And mandarin-ducks lie side by side,
All he can see is the smile of the new love
While the old love weeps unheard.
Pure was the spring in its mountain-source,
But away from the mountain its waters are roiled . . .
Waiting for her maid to come from selling pearls
For straw to cover the roof again,
She breaks off flowers, not now for her hair,
And absently fills up her hand with pine needles
And, forgetting her worn silk sleeve, and the cold,
Leans in the sunset by a tall bamboo.

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## TO WELCOME A GUEST

*by Tu Fu*

To north and south are spring floods,
Where ceaseless flocks of gulls soar.
No guest had found my dim path
Till you approached the closed door.
The market's far for food's taste,
The household's poor for wine's store;
But if the neighbor's called in,
He'll drink with us a cup more.

*Louise Strong Hammond*

*This translation is in the original syllabic and rhyme scheme.*

## SENT TO LI PO AS A GIFT

*by Tu Fu*

Autumn comes,
We meet each other.
You still whirl about as a thistledown in the wind.
Your elixir of immortality is not yet perfected
And, remembering Ko Hung, you are ashamed.
You drink a great deal,
You sing wild songs,
Your days pass in emptiness.
Your nature is a spreading fire,
It is swift and strenuous.
But what does all this bravery amount to?

*Florence Ayscough* and *Amy Lowell*

## TO LI PO AT THE SKY'S END

*by Tu Fu*

A cold wind blows from the far sky.
What is my old friend thinking of?
The wild-geese never answer me —
Rivers and lakes are flooded with rain.
Poets were not made for ease,
Yet devils haunt a wanderer.
Ask a sorry ghost, by throwing
Poems into the Mi-lo River.[1]

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## A SONG OF AN OLD CYPRESS

*by Tu Fu*

Before the temple of K'ung Ming stands an ancient cypress
With a trunk of green bronze and a root of stone.
The girth of its white bark would be the reach of forty men,

[1] Where Ch'ü Yüan, author of the "Li Sao" had drowned himself.

Its tip of kingfisher-blue is two thousand feet in heaven.
Dating from the days of great rulers and great statesmen,
Their very tree is loved now and honored by the people.
Clouds come to it from far away, from the Wu cliffs,
And the cold moon glistens on its peak of snow . . .
East of the Silk Pavilion, yesterday I found
The old ruler and wise statesman both worshiped in one temple,
Whose tree, with curious branches, ages the whole landscape
In spite of the fresh colours of the windows and the doors.
And so firm is the deep root, so established underground,
That its lone lofty boughs can dare the weight of winds,
Its only protection the heavenly power,
Its only endurance the art of its creator . . .
When beams are required, to repair a great house,
Though oxen sway ten thousand heads, they can not move a mountain.
A tree writes no memorial, yet people understand
That not unless they fell it, can use be made of it.
Though its bitter heart be tenanted by black and white ants,
Its odorous leaves were once the nest of phoenixes and pheasants . . .
Let wise and hopeful men harbour no complaint! —
The greater the timber, the tougher to use.

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## SINCE SHE WENT AWAY

*by Tu Fu*

Bring me no more flowers. Bring me cypress branches in which to plunge my face.

When the sun has disappeared behind the mountains I put on my robe of blue with the thin sleeves and go and sleep among the bamboos which she loved.

*Gertrude Laughlin Joerissen,*
from the French of *Franz Toussaint*

## IN ABSENCE

*by Tu Fu*

White gleam the gulls across the darkling tide,
On the green hills the red flowers seem to burn;
Alas! I see another spring has died . . .
When will it come — the day of my return?

*Herbert A. Giles*

## THE LITTLE RAIN

*by Tu Fu*

Oh! she is good, the little rain! and well she knows our need
Who cometh in the time of spring to aid the sun-drawn seed:
She wanders with a friendly wind through silent nights unseen,
The furrows feel her happy tears, and lo! the land is green.

Last night cloud-shadows gloomed the path that winds to my abode,
And the torches of the river-boats like angry meteors glowed.
To-day fresh colours break the soil, and butterflies take wing
Down broidered lawns all bright with pearls in the garden of the king.

*L. Cranmer-Byng*

## REFLECTION BY NIGHT

*by Tu Fu*

Some scattered grass. A shore breeze blowing light.
A giddy mast. A lonely boat at night.
The wide-flung stars o'erhang all vasty space.
The moonbeams with the Yangtze's current race.

How by my pen can I to fame attain?
Worn out, from office better to refrain.
Drifting o'er life — and what in sooth am I?
A sea-gull floating twixt the earth and sky.

*W. J. B. Fletcher*

## THE PHILOSOPHERS

*by Po Chü-i* (772–846 A.D.)

### Lao-Tzu

"Those who speak know nothing;
Those who know are silent."
These words, as I am told,
Were spoken by Lao-Tzu.
If we are to believe that Lao-Tzu
Was himself *one who knew*,
How comes it that he wrote a book
Of five thousand words?

### Chuang-Tzu, the Monist

Chaung-Tzu levels all things
And reduces them to the same Monad.
But *I* say that even in their sameness
Differences may be found
Although in following the promptings of their nature
They display the same tendency;
Yet it seems to me that in some ways
A phoenix is superior to a reptile!

*Arthur Waley*

## THE RED COCKATOO

*by Po Chü-i*

Sent as a present from Annam —
A red cockatoo.
Coloured like the peach-tree blossom,
Speaking with the speech of men.

*Po Chü-i, another famous poet, was an extremely learned and able man. He held many official positions, sometimes in the provinces, and sometimes in Ch'ang-an the capital. His highest position was President of the Board of War — a post which, it must be admitted, few poets could hold satisfactorily in the West.*

And they did to it what is always done
To the learned and eloquent.
They took a cage with stout bars
And shut it up inside.

*Arthur Waley*

## DREAMING THAT I WENT WITH LU AND YU TO VISIT YÜAN CHEN

*by Po Chü-i*

(*Written in exile*)

At night I dreamt I was back in Ch'ang-an;
I saw again the faces of old friends.
And in my dreams, under an April sky,
They led me by the hand to wander in the spring winds.
Together we came to the village of Peace and Quiet;
We stopped our horses at the gate of Yüan Chen.
Yüan Chen was sitting all alone;
When he saw me coming, a smile came to his face.
He pointed back at the flowers in the western court;
Then opened wine in the northern summerhouse.
He seemed to be saying that neither of us had changed;
He seemed to be regretting that joy will not stay;
That our souls had met only for a little while,
To part again with hardly time for greeting.
I woke up and thought him still at my side;
I put out my hand; there was nothing there at all.

*Arthur Waley*

## ON HIS BALDNESS

*by Po Chü-i*

At dawn I sighed to see my hairs fall;
At dusk I sighed to see my hairs fall.
For I dreaded the time when the last lock should go . . .
They are all gone and I do not mind at all!

I have done with that cumbrous washing and getting dry;
My tiresome comb forever is laid aside.
Best of all, when the weather is hot and wet,
To have no topknot weighing down on one's head!
I put aside my dusty conical cap;
And loose my collar fringe,
In a silver jar I have stored a cold stream;
On my bald pate I trickle a ladle-full.
Like one baptized with the Water of Buddha's Law,
I sit and receive this cool, cleansing joy.
*Now* I know why the priest who seeks repose
Frees his heart by first shaving his head.

*Arthur Waley*

## SONG FROM "THE NEVER-ENDING WRONG"

*by Po Chü-i*

*"The Never-Ending Wrong" is Po Chü-i's most popular poem, and deals with a theme much celebrated by poets and painters, the love of the Emperor Ming Huang, the patron of Li Po, for the lovely concubine Yang Kuei-fei. The emperor was completely in her power, and her follies and extravagances became so great that when a rebellion broke out, and the emperor was obliged to flee his court, the soldiers refused to fight any longer unless Yang Kuei-fei was delivered up to them to be killed. Broken-hearted, Ming Huang was forced to consent to her execution. After her death the emperor roamed in exile for some years, finally returning to his home, where he dwelt sorrowfully, living in dreams of past happiness. The poem goes on to tell of a visit made by a Taoist priest, on behalf of Ming Huang, to the shade of Yang Kuei-fei where she dwelt among the immortals. Here she reiterated her love for Ming Huang, sent him as a token half of a brooch, of which she kept the other half, and swore to love him through eternity. The poem is written in separate lyrics, of which the following is one.*

### Flight

Clouds upon clouds of dust enveloping
The lofty gates of the proud capital.

On, on, to the southwest, a living wall,
Ten thousand battle-chariots on the wing.

Feathers and jewels flashing through the cloud
Onwards, and then a halt. The legions wait
A hundred li beyond the western gate;
The great walls loom behind them wrapt in cloud.

No further stirs the sullen soldiery,
Naught but the last dread office can avail,
Till she of the dark moth-eyebrows, lily pale,
Shines through tall avenues of spears to die.

Upon the ground lie ornaments of gold,
One with the dust, and none to gather them,
Hair-pins of jade and many a costly gem,
Kingfishers' wings and golden birds scarce cold.

The king has sought the darkness of his hands,
Veiling the eyes that looked for help in vain,
And as he turns to gaze upon the slain,
His tears, her blood, are mingled on the sands.

*L. Cranmer-Byng*

## MADLY SINGING IN THE MOUNTAINS

*by Po Chü-i*

There is no one among men that has not a special failing:
And my failing consists in writing verses.
I have broken away from the thousand ties of life:
But this infirmity still remains behind.
Each time that I look at a fine landscape:
Each time that I meet a loved friend,
I raise my voice and recite a stanza of poetry
And am glad as though a god had crossed my path.
Ever since the day I was banished to Hsün-yang
Half my time I have lived among the hills.

And often, when I have finished a new poem,
Alone I climb the road to the Eastern Rock.
I lean my body on the banks of white stone:
I pull down with my hands a green cassia branch.
My mad singing startles the valleys and hills:
The apes and birds all come to peep.
Fearing to become a laughing-stock to the world,
I choose a place that is unfrequented by men.

*Arthur Waley*

## CLIMBING THE TERRACE OF KUAN-YIN AND LOOKING AT THE CITY

*by Po Chü-i*

Hundreds of houses, thousands of houses — like a chessboard.
The twelve streets like a field planted with rows of cabbage.
In the distance perceptible, dim, dim — the fire of approaching dawn;
And a single row of stars lying to the west of the Five Gates.

*Arthur Waley*

## LAST POEM

*by Po Chü-i*

. . . . . .

They have put my bed beside the unpainted screen;
They have shifted my stove in front of the blue curtain.
I listen to my grandchildren, reading me a book;
I watch the servants, heating up my soup.
With rapid pencil I answer the poems of friends;
I feel in my pockets and pull out medicine-money.
When this superintendence of trifling affairs is done,
I lie back on my pillows and sleep with my face to the south.

*Arthur Waley*

## THE TOMB OF CHAO-CHÜN

### *by Ch'ang Ch'ien (about 720 A.D.)*

*The story of the beautiful Chao-Chün is a favorite theme of Chinese poets and ballad-mongers. The Emperor Kaotsu, the founder of the glorious Han dynasty, made a treaty with a certain Prince of the Huns, who as a pledge of its fulfilment demanded the hand of "a flower from the palace of the Hans." Kaotsu sent a messenger to the capital with orders that all the girls in the palace apartments awaiting a summons from the Emperor should have their portraits painted. When this was done he chose from the number the dullest and most insipid, and commanded the original to be brought into his presence before sending her to the Prince. The astonished court then beheld a girl whose beauty enchanted all eyes, a vision of loveliness unsurpassed. But the Emperor's word was final, and Chao-Chün crossed the border to her lifelong exile. The Emperor wreacked his vengeance on the faithless painter whose lying portrait was the cause of her sacrifice, but her lost charms obsessed him, and he could never forget. Vainly the caravan of a hundred camels, laden with gold, the ransom for an Empress, set out for the country of the Huns. Their Prince refused all offers for her while she lived, and when she died even the last honour of burial in her native land was rejected.*

Death would have ravished her some hapless day
Even among the palaces of Han,
But she was never born to taste
The bitterness of fate so far away —
This pearl of beauty for whose sake did haste
The camels' golden-gleaming caravan.
To-day but dust and bones remain
Of her whose ransom threaded the cold steppes in vain.

Night fell on chariots to the frontier ranged,
But horses champed, for none were fain to part.
Each cursed the lying hand, the traitor's heart.
The moon surprised us scattered round the tomb,
And all our tears were changed
To little piteous lights that ringed the gloom.

*L. Cranmer-Byng.*

## THE FIGURED HARP

*by Li Shang-yin* (813–858 A.D.)

I wondered why my figured harp had fifty strings,
Each with its flower-like fret an interval of youth . . .
The sage Chuang was day-dreaming, bewitched by butterflies,
The spring-heart of Emperor Wang was crying in a cuckoo,
Mermen wept their pearly tears down a moon-green sea,
Blue fields were breathing their jade to the sun . . .
A moment that ought to have lasted forever
Had come and gone before I knew.

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## TO A FRIEND IN THE NORTH

*by Li Shang-yin*

You ask when I come . . . and I dream of Pa Mountains,
Of autumn-pools brimming all night with the rain,
Of trimming a wick in the western window —
Of hearing your voice all night in the rain.

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## A CICADA

*by Li Shang-yin*

Pure of heart and therefore hungry,
All night long you cry in vain
With a final, broken, indrawn breath.
Among the green, indifferent trees . . .
Knocking about like a piece of driftwood,
Letting my garden fill with weeds,
I bless you for your true advice
To purify my life again.

*Witter Bynner* and *Kiang Kang-hu*

## TOGETHER WE KNOW HAPPINESS

*by an Emperor of the Southern T'ang Dynasty*
*(tenth century* A.D.)

Silent and alone, I ascended the West Cupola.
The moon was like a golden hook.
In the quiet, empty, inner courtyard, the coolness of early autumn
enveloped the wu-tung tree.

Scissors cannot cut this thing;
Unraveled, it joins again and clings.
It is the sorrow of separation,
And none other tastes to the heart like this.

*Florence Ayscough* and *Amy Lowell*

## TASTE

*by Yang Chü-yüan (eighth and ninth centuries* A.D.)

The landscape which the poet loves
is that of early May,
When budding greenness half concealed
enwraps each willow spray.
That beautiful embroidery
the days of summer yield,
Appeals to every bumpkin
who takes his walk afield.

*Herbert A. Giles*

## HOMEWARD

*by Li Pin (about* 854 A.D.)

No letters to the frontier come,
The winter softens into spring . . .
I tremble as I draw near home,
And dare not ask what news you bring.

*Herbert A. Giles*

## THINKING OF HOME

*by an Unknown Author (T'ang Dynasty)*

The moon is shining on this borderland,
Just as it will be shining on Lung-t'ow.
The sea is very quiet on the sand;
I wonder what the folk are doing now.

The wild geese settle with the same old cry,
The moonlight sleeps upon the threshold stone.
The millet in the field is shoulder high,
And my young wife goes up the path alone.

*Helen Waddell,*
after *James Legge*

## SEPARATION

*by Yüeh-hua (T'ang Dynasty)*

I was together with my lord as form and shadow; now we are divided
as Wu from Yüeh. From our jade pillow
For the past year have we been torn asunder and parted.
I mount the terrace and gaze to the north, where mist and rain are
dark —
I turn my body; I weep, before the moon in the still sky.

*Florence Ayscough*

## SEEKING THE HERMIT IN VAIN

*by Chia Tao (777–841 A.D.)*

"Gone to gather herbs" —
So they say of you.
But in cloud-girt hills,
What am I to do?

*Louise Strong Hammond*

*This translation is in the original syllabic and rhyme scheme.*

# LATER DYNASTIES

*after 960* A.D.

## FOUR QUATRAINS

### 1

### An Old Man's Song of Spring

*by Seng Dji-Nan (Sung Dynasty)*

Among the trees I may yet
Enjoy the day at sunset;
For willow winds are not cold,
Apricot rains are not wet.

### 2

### Night-time in Spring

*by Wang An-Shih* (1021–1086 A.D.)

Silence reigns where sound has been;
Chill the breeze, half soft, half keen;
While the moon through sleepless hours
Shifts dark blossoms up the screen.

### 3

### The Sudden Coming of Spring

*by Ch'en Hao* (1032–1085 A.D.)

Scant clouds just flake the noon sky;
By willowed streamlets stroll I.
But men know not my heart's joy,
And say, "Old fool, the hours fly."

4

### On Being Denied Admittance to a Friend's Garden

*by Yeh Shih* (1150–1223 A.D.)

Although your gate bar *my* way,
You cannot check the spring's play;
For free above your proud wall
There hangs one apricot spray.

*Louise Strong Hammond*

*In the original syllabic and rhyme scheme, to accompany the Chinese chanting tunes.*

### ON THE BIRTH OF A SON

*by Su Shih, also called Su Tung-Po* (1036–1101 A.D.)

Families when a child is born
Hope it will turn out intelligent.
I, through intelligence
Having wrecked my whole life,
Only hope that the baby will prove
Ignorant and stupid.
Then he'll be happy all his days
And grow into a cabinet minister.

*Arthur Waley*

### FLOWER SHADOWS

*By Su Shih*

Thick lie the shadows of the flowers on the floor of the Jasper Pavilion.
Many times have I told the little boy but he does not sweep them away.
No sooner does the setting sun remove them
Than a bright moon comes and throws them down again.

*Alan Simms Lee*

## A FEAST OF LANTERNS

*by Yuan Mei* (1715–1797 A.D.)

In spring for sheer delight
I set the lanterns swinging through the trees,
Bright as the myriad argosies of night,
That ride the clouded billows of the sky.
Red dragons leap and plunge in gold and silver seas,
And, O my garden gleaming cold and white,
Thou hast outshone the far faint moon on high.

*L. Cranmer-Byng*

## IN AN OLD LIBRARY

*by Yuan Mei*

Ten thousand tomes with pendant discs of jade,
Bowls of old Shang with bronze of Chow displayed,
And suddenly the small
Tinkle of girdle gems floats through the hall,
As though the wind custodian sings —
"I guard the fragrance of a thousand springs.
Draw near! draw near!
Ten thousand yesterdays are gathered here."

*L. Cranmer-Byng*

## FRAGMENT OF A POEM

*by Cheng Pan Ch'iao* (1780)

The old monk in his ancient temple.
In loneliness he burns incense;
Lonely he strikes the great bell.
He offers sunflower seeds and wheat to the gods.
The door, broken and falling, will not shut.
Golden the rays of the setting sun strike on the scattered groves of pine.

The stars peer in through the crevices in the broken walls.
He sits, Buddha-wise, on his straw mat, meditating in the darkness.
In the deep night he makes a little tea,
His brazier glowing red in the blackness.

*Alan Simms Lee*

*India*

# *The Poetry of India*

THE KEY-NOTE OF INDIAN POETRY is its subjectivity. Where his neighbour, the classic poet of China, dwelt in the world of the senses, writing minutely of what he saw and heard, the Indian poet dwelt in a far, beautiful world of imagination and fancy, a world of gods, heroes and lovely melting women, of religious mysticism, and of spiritual union with nature. Profoundly convinced, even before the advent of the Buddha — who lived about 500 years before Christ — that the world of the senses was illusory, that the spirit passed through many stages and occupied many human forms before its final absorption into the life force, the poet of India wrote of the things of the spirit, recording only those things of the senses which seemed necessary to make his meaning clear.

This attitude gave him, as it still gives his countrymen to-day, a peculiar detachment from the happenings of this temporal world. And with this detachment goes a great gentleness, a tenderness towards the beauty of this world that passes like smoke and leaves no trace. Not the tenderness of regret, such as Villon felt for the dear dead ladies of yesteryear, but the tenderness of acceptance, of acquiescence. The beauty which has once existed still exists for him where all beauty is preserved, in the realm of the spirit. He rejoices in it; he does not mourn its passing.

Indian poetry in its great days fastened its eyes on the eternal, the beautiful, the good, and as a matter of course omitted what was temporal and disagreeable. In the whole volume of the work of Kalidasa, the greatest poet of India, and one of the greatest poets of all time, there is hardly a mention of evil in any form, except where dramatic necessity compels him to record that the appearance of evil exists, ultimately to be absorbed into the beautiful.

Not that the Indian poet does not observe. He does, at times with almost painful accuracy. His descriptions of nature are minute and loving to an extraordinary degree, and such a poet as Mayura

must actually have suffered from the vividness of his sense perceptions. But these things do not seem to him important in themselves. They are always part of something else.

Indian poetry is essentially lyric poetry. Even the long epics, when compared with the Greek and north European epics, seem to be more lyric than heroic. The poets continually digress into purely lyric moods and descriptions and elaborate imagery, or, as in the "Mahabharata" particularly, into mystic and didactic interludes. Time never troubles the Indians. They do not feel, as the European poets usually do, that lyricism must be comparatively short. They think nothing of writing a poem which sustains a purely romantic and lyric mood through 150 or 200 stanzas. The reader who is impatient, or who applies our own standards of condensation to the Indian poets will miss much. To appreciate them fully one must put oneself in the mood of a long, lazy summer day — such as India knows so well — enjoying each moment, or each stanza, as it slips by, tasting the imagery without waiting for the dramatic climax to which we are accustomed.

The classic poet, however, often excelled as a dramatist. To him the drama seemed to be almost another form of poetry. Written in alternate prose and verse, the drama was none the less conceived in a pure lyric spirit. Tragedy is unknown. Faithful love always triumphs, and all things grow smooth at last for the lovers — with whom this drama invariably deals. Indeed the faith and purity of love is the chief of all themes for the poet, in whatever form he writes. These dramas, charming and graceful as they are on the stage, especially when played by the Indians with their gentle gestures and soft voices, leave the hearer with the impression of having seen a poem acted, rather than a drama as we conceive drama.

Another form in which the classic poets excelled is the short sententious saying. They delighted in wise saws, little bits of gnomic wisdom, which are sometimes isolated, often scattered through the longer poems. Many of them are full of a captivating dry humor.

As religious poetry is outside the scope of this volume, all that need be said of it here is that Indian mystic poetry is probably the greatest of its sort ever written anywhere, and that the Indian section suffers more than any other, with the possible exception of the Persian, by its necessary omission.

The Indian indifference to the affairs of the temporal world has caused western scholars an endless amount of trouble in their modern

and scientific study of Sanskrit literature. Although the classic poetry is venerated to-day as it has been since it was written, and countless commentaries and appreciations exist, nowhere is any date recorded. "The very date of Kalidasa, the greatest of Indian poets," says Arthur A. Macdonell in his "History of Sanskrit Literature," "was long a matter of controversy within the limits of a thousand years, and is even now doubtful to the extent of a century or two." Only about 500 A.D. do dates begin to appear. The reader will therefore understand that the dates given here for the early works are only approximate, and may any of them be wrong by a hundred years or more. They are given because they afford some rough idea of the lapse of centuries, and also because they indicate the chronological sequence of these works, which is much more definitely known than their dates.

Indian literature and culture, like the Chinese, has come down in an unbroken line from the dawn of history. The first great Indian period, the Vedic age, lasted from somewhere about 2,000 B.C. to about 200 B.C. It was almost purely a religious age. During it the great national religion, Brahminism, and the great world religion, Buddhism, took shape. In literature it has left us the "Vedas," the "Brahmanas," the "Upanishads" and the "Sutras." With most of these this volume cannot concern itself. Certain secular poems however exist in the "Rig-Veda" and the later scripts, and some of them are quoted to give an idea of the style of these hearty and primitive writings.

The second great period is the classic Sanskrit period strictly speaking. It opened about the time the Vedic age was closing and extended to the Mohammedan conquest in 1000 A.D. In a certain sense, however, this period may be said to extend to our day, since Sanskrit is still spoken as the tongue of the learned by thousands of Brahmins and literature is still produced in it. This volume, however, includes little beyond the great period, and only those poems written in Sanskrit and the accompanying popular dialect Prakrit, which is often interspersed with Sanskrit in the dramas, much as Shakespeare introduced the vernacular into his plays. It has been found impossible to include here the many charming poems, some of them also quite early, written in the other dialects of India.

The two great epics, the "Mahabharata" and the "Ramayana," probably took shape about 500 B.C. or earlier, at the beginning of the Sanskrit period, and were added to for centuries. Especially the

" Mahabharata " accumulated so great a mass of mystic and didactic material that in its final form it is hardly an epic at all, but an encyclopedia of religious and moral teaching. Its epic kernel forms only about one fifth of the whole. Its total length is 100,000 *clokas*, or quatrains, equal to about eight times the length of the " Iliad " and the " Odyssey " put together. It is thus by far the longest poem known to literary history. Its authors are unknown, the poem being signed " Vyasa," which means simply " the Arranger."

The " Ramayana " on the other hand, which is much shorter, being only about 24,000 *clokas*, although it is as old or older than the " Mahabharata," differs from it in being in the main the work of a single author, Valmiki, and in being a much more unified and coherent epic.

From about 300 to 700 A.D. the great poets were much preoccupied with the drama. Kalidasa belongs to this period, with his inimitable " Sakuntala," and the unknown master who gave us " The Little Clay Cart." Much of the best poetry of this era is inserted in the form of short lyrics into these dramas. Of the later poets Bhartrihari, author of many charming short lyrics, and Jayadeva deserve especial mention. The " Gita Govinda " of Jayadeva is an essentially Indian rhapsodic work, half drama and half pure lyric, which has been given by commentators a profound mystic significance. It is here included however for its obvious beauty as love poetry, leaving any other interpretation to those better able than I to judge of such matters.

Indian prosody distinguishes rather sharply between the two great periods, the Vedic and the Sanskrit. In the more primitive Vedic age rime was not used. The metric unit was the line, feet being ignored, and in the line the rhythm of the last four or five syllables only was determined, the rest not being subject to rule. The effect is therefore more elastic than in later work. Some fifteen meters were used of which seven are fairly common. The usual line contained eight, eleven or twelve syllables, and the meter was in general iambic. The eight syllable line usually ended in two iambes. Three of these lines combined to make the *gayatri* meter, in which about one fourth of the hymns in the " Rig-Veda " are composed. Arthur A. Macdonell, in his " History of Sanskrit Literature " has translated the first stanza of the Rig-Veda which is in this meter into an equivalent English rhythm as follows.

I praise Agni, domestic priest,
God, minister of sacrifice,
Herald, most prodigal of wealth.

In the later Sanskrit period the prosody was founded on the Vedic meters, but they were much more strictly developed. The metrical regulation of the line, starting from its end, finally extended to the whole, with the single exception of the loose meter or *cloka*, in which the epics were written, and which retained a certain measure of the elasticity of the early forms — very wisely, since a poem of the length of the "Mahabharata" would become unendurable in a perfectly regulated metre. Rhyme was used, sometimes in very elaborate internal rhyme schemes. Long compounds were used as an embellishment, and highly fantastic and exaggerated images were developed. The whole was subject to very exacting rules of poetics. A single poem like the "Gita Govinda" employed a great variety of meters which were constantly changed.

The great bulk of the translations of Indian poetry, with a few exceptions, notably Arthur W. Ryder's vivid and at the same time scholarly work, were made a number of years ago, in a day less exacting from the point of view of poetic technique than our own. None of the modern poets has given it much attention. The translations are therefore, taken as a whole, less good as English poetry than are many of the translations in other sections of this volume. The medium through which we see the old Indian poets is none too transparent, but anyone willing to lay aside his prejudices as to technique in English may still see through it the quality and the beauty of the great early poets of one of the oldest and most essentially poetic nations of the world.

FROM THE

# "RIG-VEDA"

*before 1000* B.C.

## FUNERAL HYMN

*by an Unknown Author*

From the dead hand I take the bow he wielded,
To gain for us dominion, might, and glory.
Thou there, we here, rich in heroic offspring,
Will vanquish all assaults of every foeman.

Approach the bosom of the earth, the mother,
This earth extending far and most propitious:
Young, soft as wool to bounteous givers, may she
Preserve thee from the lap of dissolution.

Open wide, O earth, press not heavily on him,
Be easy of approach, hail him with kindly aid;
As with a robe a mother hides
Her son, so shroud this man, O earth.

*Arthur A. Macdonell*

## IN PRAISE OF BOW AND ARROW

*by an Unknown Author*

The warrior's look is like a thunderous rain-cloud's,
when, armed with mail, he seeks the lap of battle.
Be thou victorious with unwounded body: so let the
thickness of thy mail protect thee.

*The "Rig-Veda" is a collection of very ancient lyric hymns, almost entirely religious in character. It contains, however, a certain number of secular poems, from which those given here have been selected.*

With bow let us win kine, with bow the battle,
with bow be victors in our hot encounters.
The bow brings grief and sorrow to the foeman:
armed with the bow may we subdue all regions.
Close to his ear, as fain to speak, she presses, holding
her well-loved friend in her embraces.
Strained on the bow, she whispers like a woman —
this bowstring that preserves us in the combat.
These, meeting like a woman and her lover, bear,
mother-like, their child upon their bosom.
May the two bow-ends, starting swift asunder, scatter,
in unison, the foes who hate us.
Her tooth a deer, dressed in an eagle's feathers,
bound with cow-hide, launched forth, she flieth onward.
There where the heroes speed hither and thither,
there may the arrows shelter and protect us.

*Ralph T. H. Griffith*

## FRAGMENT OF A HYMN

### *by an Unknown Author*

Who are you, O men, the very best, who have approached one by one, from the furthest distance?
Where are your horses, where the bridles? How could you, how did you come? — the seat on the back, the rein in the nostrils?
Their goad is on the croup, the heroes stretch their legs apart . . .
Move along, heroes, young men, the sons of an excellent mother, so that you may warm yourselves at our fire.

May the woman, if she stretched out her arm as a rest for the hero, praised by Syavasva, gain cattle consisting of horses, cows, and a hundred sheep.
Many a woman is even more often kindlier than a godless and miserly man,
A woman who finds out the weak, the thirsty, the needy, and is mindful of the gods.
Even though many an unpraiseworthy miser is called a man, she is worth as much in weregild.

Also the young woman joyfully whispered to me, to Syava, the road — and the two bays went straight to Purumilha, the wise, the far-famed,
Who gave me a hundred cows, like Vaidadasvi, like Taranta, in magnificence.

*F. Max Müller*

## THE DICE

*by an Unknown Author*

Downward they fall, then nimbly leaping upward,
They overpower the man with hands, though handless.
Cast on the board like magic bits of charcoal,
Though cold themselves, they burn the heart to ashes.

It pains a gambler when he sees a woman,
Another's wife, and their well-ordered household:
He yokes these brown steeds early in the morning,
And, when the fire is low, sinks down an outcast.

"Play not with dice, but cultivate thy cornfield;
Rejoice in thy goods, deeming them abundant:
There are thy cows, there is thy wife, O gambler."
This counsel Savitri the kindly gives me.

*Arthur A. Macdonell*

## O INDU, FLOW ROUND FOR INDRA

*by an Unknown Author*

Varied truly are our thoughts. Varied are the ways of men. The joiner wants to find a breakage, the medicine man an accident, the brahmin-priest a worshiper. O Indu, flow round for Indra.

The smith with brittle firewood, with wings of birds to fan the flame, with stones and glowing heat of fire, wants golden riches for himself. O Indu, flow round for Indra.

I'm poet, dad is medicine man, mama is grinding at the mill. With varied thoughts intent on gain we follow after wealth of cows. O Indu, flow round for Indra.

The horse an easy car to draw, the troop of lovers jest and laugh, the frog wants too a water-pool. O Indu, flow round for Indra.

*Edward J. Thomas*

## TO THE HOUSE DOG

*by an Unknown Author*

When thou showest thy teeth, O silver-white and brown, son of Sarama, they shine like spears in the jaws of the biter. Fall asleep.

Bark at the thief, O son of Sarama, or at the robber, thou that runnest back. Thou barkest at the praisers of Indra. Why dost thou seek to harm us? Fall asleep.

Rend the boar. May the boar rend thee. Thou barkest at the praisers of Indra. Why dost thou seek to harm us? Fall asleep.

May the mother sleep, the father, the dog, the householder. Sleep all this kinsfolk, and all this people round.

We close the eyes of him who sits and him who goes, and of the people who behold us, thus like this dwelling.

With the powerful thousand-horned bull, who came out of the ocean, we put the people to sleep.

The women lying on beds, lying on litters, on couches, women sweetly scented, we put them all to sleep.

*Edward J. Thomas*

## INCANTATION FOR ONE LYING AT THE POINT OF DEATH

*by an Unknown Author*

Just as a yoke with leathern thong
They fasten on that it may hold:
So have I now held fast thy soul,
That thou mayst live and mayst not die,
Anon to be unhurt and well.

Downward is blown the blast of wind,
Downward the burning sunbeams shoot,
Adown the milk streams from the cow:
So downward may thy ailment go.

*Arthur A. Macdonell*

## CHARM TO QUELL A RIVAL
### *by an Unknown Author*

From out the earth I dig this plant, an herb of most effectual power,
Wherewith one quells the rival wife and gains the husband for one-self.
Auspicious, with expanded leaves, sent by the gods, victorious plant,
Blow thou the rival wife away, and make my husband only mine.
Stronger am I, O stronger one, yea, mightier than the mightier;
And she who is my rival wife is lower than the lowest dames.
Her very name I utter not: she takes no pleasure in this man.

Far into distance most remote drive we the rival wife away.
I am the conqueror, and thou, thou also art victorious:
As victory attends us both we will subdue my fellow-wife.
I have gained thee for vanquisher, have grasped thee with a stronger spell.
As a cow hastens to her calf, so let thy spirit speed to me, hasten like water on its way.

*Ralph T. H. Griffith*

## THE CHARM HAS SUCCEEDED
### *by an Unknown Author*

Yon sun hath mounted up, and this my happy fate hath mounted high.
I, knowing this, as conqueror have won my husband for mine own.
I am the banner and the head, a mighty arbitress am I:
I am victorious, and my lord shall be submissive to my will.
My sons are slayers of the foe, my daughter is a ruling queen:
I am victorious: o'er my lord my song of triumph is supreme.

Oblation, that which Indra gave and thus grew glorious and most high —
This have I offered, O ye gods, and rid me of each rival wife.
Destroyer of the rival wife, sole spouse, victorious, conqueror,
The others' glory have I seized as 'twere the wealth of weaker dames.
I have subdued as conqueror these rivals, these my fellow-wives,
That I may hold imperial sway over this hero and the folk.

*Ralph T. H. Griffith*

## FROM THE
# "ARTHARVA-VEDA"

*about 1000* B.C.

### CHARM TO STOP THE FLOW OF BLOOD

*by an Unknown Author*

The maidens that go yonder, the veins, clothed in red garments, like sisters without a brother, bereft of strength, they shall stand still!

Stand still, thou lower one, stand still, thou higher one; do thou in the middle also stand still! The most tiny vein stands still: may then the great artery also stand still!

Of the hundred arteries, and the thousand veins, those in the middle here have indeed stood still. At the same time the ends have ceased to flow.

Around you has passed a great sandy dike: stand ye still, pray take your ease!

*Maurice Bloomfield*

### CHARM AGAINST FEVER

*by an Unknown Author*

Homage be to the deliriously hot, the shaking, exciting, impetuous fever! Homage to the cold fever, to him that in the past fulfilled desires!

May the fever that returns on the morrow, he that returns on two successive days, the impious one, pass into this frog!

*Maurice Bloomfield*

*The "Artharva-Veda" is, in the main, a book of spells and incantations appealing to the demon world.*

## CHARM FOR LUCK

*by an Unknown Author*

Oh dice, give play that profit brings,
Like cows that yield abundant milk:
Attach me to a streak of gain,
As with a string the bow is bound.

*Arthur A. Macdonell*

## FROM THE
# "AITAREYA BRAHMANA"

*about 600* B.C.

### ON THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A SON

*by an Unknown Author*

In him a father pays a debt
And reaches immortality,
When he beholds the countenance
Of a son born to him alive.

Than all the joy which living things
In waters feel, in earth and fire,
The happiness that in his son
A father feels is greater far.

At all times fathers by a son
Much darkness, too, have passed beyond:
In him the father's self is born,
He wafts him to the other shore.

Food is man's life and clothes afford protection,
Gold gives him beauty, marriages bring cattle;
His wife's a friend, his daughter causes pity:
A son is like a light in highest heaven.

*Arthur A. Macdonell*

*The "Brahmanas," of which there are several, are for the most part ritualistic in character, and serve as commentaries on the "Vedas." The "Upanishads," from which no quotation is given here, form the last section of the "Brahmanas," and belong purely to the realm of religious mysticism. The "Sutras," the last stage of Vedic literature, are treatises dealing with Vedic ritual.*

FROM THE

# "MAHABHARATA"

*which is signed Vyasa, "the arranger," but whose authorship is unknown. Its original form probably dates from about 500* B.C. *and its present form was probably reached by 350* A.D.

## COMBAT OF THE HEROES

Helméd Arjun, crownéd Karna, met at last by will of fate,
Life long was their mutual anger, deathless was their mutual hate!

And the firm earth shook and trembled 'neath the furious rush of war,
And the echoing welkin answered shouts that nations heard afar,

And the thickening cloud of arrows filled the firmament on high,
Darker, deeper, dread and deadlier, grew the angry face of sky,

Till the evening's sable garment mantled o'er the battle-field,
And the angry rivals parted, neither chief could win or yield!

* * *

Stronger by his elder's blessing Arjun mounts the battle-car,
Krishna drives the milk-white coursers to the thickening ranks of war.

*The name "Mahabharata" means the "Great Poem of the Bharatas," and its epic kernel is the story of the war between the descendants of King Bharata, son of Sakuntala, who are divided into two camps. Arjun, with his four brothers — the sons of Pandu — is the great hero of one side and Karna the hero of the other side. The "Bhagavad-gita," or "Sacred Song," is inserted in the middle of one of its battle pieces.*

*The combat between Arjun and Karna is to the "Mahabharata" what the combat between Achilles and Hector is to the "Iliad."*

Onward came the fiery Karna with his chiefs and arméd men,
Salya urged his flying coursers with the whip and loosened rein,

Often met and often parted, life-long rivals in their fame,
Not to part again the heroes, each before the other came,

Not to part until a chieftain by the other chief was slain,
Arjun dead or lifeless Karna pressed the Kuru-kshetra plain!

Long they strove, but neither archer could his gallant foeman beat,
Though like surging ocean billows did the angry warriors meet.

Arjun's arrows fell on Karna like the summer's angry flood,
Karna's shafts like hissing serpents drank the valiant Arjun's blood,

Fierce and quick from his *Gandiva* angry accents Arjun woke,
Till the bow-string strained and heated was by sudden impulse broke!

" Hold," cried Arjun to his rival, " mind the honoured rules of war,
Warriors strike not helpless foemen thus disabled on the car,

Hold, brave Karna, until Arjun mends his over-strainéd bow,
Arjun then will crave for mercy nor from god nor mortal foe! "

Vain he spake, for wild with anger heedless Karna fiercely lowered,
Thick and fast on bowless Arjun countless arrows darkly showered,

Like the cobra dark and hissing Karna's gleaming lightning dart,
Struck the helpless archer Arjun on his broad and bleeding heart!

Furious as a wounded tiger quivering in the darksome wood,
With his mended warlike weapon now the angry Arjun stood,

Blazing with a mighty radiance like a flame in summer night,
Fierce he fell on archer Karna with his more than mortal might!

Little recked the dauntless Karna if his foe in anger rose,
Karna feared not face of mortal, dreaded not immortal foes;

Nor with all his wrath and valour Arjun conquered him in war,
Till within the soft earth sinking stuck the wheel of Karna's car!

Stood unmoved the tilted chariot, vainly wrathful Salya strove,
Urging still the struggling coursers Karna's heavy car to move,

Vainly too the gallant Karna leaped upon the humid soil,
Sought to lift the sunken axle with a hard unwonted toil,

"Hold," he cried to noble Arjun, "wage no false and impious war
On a foeman, helpless, carless — thou upon thy lofty car."

Loudly laughed the helméd Arjun, answer nor rejoiner gave,
Unto Karna pleading virtue Krishna answered calm and grave:

"Didst thou seek the path of virtue, mighty Karna, archer bold,
When Sakuni robbed Yudhishthir of his empire and his gold,

Didst thou tread the path of honor on Yudhishthir's fatal fall,
Heaping insults on Draupadi in Hastina's council hall?

Didst thou then fulfil thy duty when, Yudhishthir's exile crossed,
Krishna asked in right and justice for Yudhishthir's empire lost,

Didst thou fight a holy battle when with six marauders skilled,
Karna hunted Abhimanyu and the youthful hero killed?

Speak not then of rules of honour, blackened in your sins you die,
Death is come in shape of Arjun, Karna's fatal hour is nigh!"

Stung to fury and to madness, faint but frantic Karna fought,
Reckless, ruthless and relentless, valiant Arjun's life he sought,

Sent his last resistless arrow on his foeman's mighty chest,
Arjun felt a shock of thunder on his broad and mailéd breast!

Fainting fell the bleeding Arjun, darkness dimmed his manly eye,
Pale and breathless watched his warriors, anxious watched the gods
in sky.

Then it passed, and helméd Arjun rose like newly lighted fire,
Abhimanyu's sad remembrance kindled fresh a father's ire!

And he drew his bow *Gandiva,* aimed his dart with stifled breath,
Vengeance for his murdered hero winged the fatal dart of death,

Like the fiery bolt of lightning Arjun's lurid arrow sped,
Like a rock of thunder riven Karna fell among the dead!

*Romesh Chunder Dutt*

## THE TALE OF SAVITRI, THE FAITHFUL WIFE

*The princess Savitri, having chosen according to custom the exiled prince Satyavan to be her husband, is informed by a prophecy that on a year from that date he is doomed to die. She marries him none the less, and lives with him and his parents in a hut in the forest. Savitri keeps the prophecy secret; and when the fatal day arrives she, after having fasted and prayed for three days and nights, asks leave to accompany her husband to the forest, where he goes to gather fuel.*

Bowing to her loving parents did the fair Savitri part,
Smile upon her pallid features, anguish in her inmost heart.

Round her silvan greenwoods blossomed 'neath a cloudless Indian sky,
Flocks of pea-fowls gorgeous plumaged flew before her wondering eye,

Birds of song and beauteous feather trilled a note in every grove,
Sweeter accents fell upon her, from her husband's lips of love!

Still with thoughtful eye Savitri watched her dear and fated lord,
Flail of grief was in her bosom but her pale lips shaped no word,

And she listened to her husband still on anxious thought intent,
Cleft in two her throbbing bosom as in silence still she went!

Gaily with the gathered wild-fruits did the prince his basket fill,
Hewed the interlacéd branches with his might and practised skill,

Till the drops stood on his forehead, weary was his aching head,
Faint he came unto Savitri and in faltering accents said:

" Cruel ache is on my forehead, fond and ever faithful wife,
And I feel a hundred needles pierce me and torment my life,

And my feeble footsteps falter and my senses seem to reel,
Fain would I beside thee linger for a sleep doth o'er me steal."

With a wild and speechless terror pale Savitri held her lord,
On her lap his head she rested as she laid him on the sward,

Narad's fatal words remembered as she watched her husband's head,
Burning lip and pallid forehead and the dark and creeping shade,

Clasped him in her beating bosom, kissed his lips with panting breath,
Darker grew the lonesome forest, and he slept the sleep of death!

In the bosom of the shadows rose a Vision dark and dread,
Shape of gloom in inky garment and a crown was on his head,

Gleaming form of sable splendor, blood-red was his sparkling eye,
And a fatal noose he carried, grim and godlike, dark and high!

And he stood in solemn silence, looked in silence on the dead,
And Savitri on the greensward gently placed her husband's head,

And a tremor shook Savitri, but a woman's love is strong,
With her hands upon her bosom thus she spake with quivering tongue:

" More than mortal is thy glory! If a radiant god thou be,
Tell me what bright name thou bearest, what thy message unto me."

" Know me," thus responded Yama, " mighty monarch of the dead,
Mortals leaving earthly mansion to my darksome realms are led,

Since with woman's full affection thou hast loved thy husband dear,
Hence before thee, faithful woman, Yama doth in form appear,

But his days and loves are ended, and he leaves his faithful wife,
In this noose I bind and carry spark of his immortal life,

Virtue graced his life and action, spotless was his princely heart,
Hence for him I came in person, princess, let thy husband part."

Yama from the prince's body, pale and bloodless, cold and dumb,
Drew the vital spark, *purusha*, smaller than the human thumb,

In his noose the spark he fastened, silent went his darksome way,
Left the body shorn of luster to its rigid cold decay.

Southward went the dark-hued Yama with the youth's immortal life,
And, for woman's love abideth, followed still the faithful wife.

"Turn Savitri," outspake Yama, "for thy husband loved and lost,
Do the rites due unto mortals by their fate predestined crossed,

For thy wifely duty ceases, follow not in fruitless woe,
And no farther living creature may with monarch Yama go!"

"But I may not choose but follow where thou takest my husband's life,
For Eternal Law divides not loving man and faithful wife,

For a woman's true affection, for a woman's sacred woe,
Grant me in thy godlike mercy farther still with him I go!

Fourfold are our human duties: first to study holy lore,
Then to live as good householders, feed the hungry at our door,

Then to pass our days in penance, last to fix our thoughts above,
But the final goal of virtue, it is truth and deathless love!"

"True and holy are thy precepts," listening Yama made reply,
"And they fill my heart with gladness and with pious purpose high,

I would bless thee, fair Savitri, but the dead come not to life,
Ask for other boon and blessing, faithful true and virtuous wife!"

"Since you so permit me, Yama," so the good Savitri said,
"For my husband's banished father let my dearest suit be made,

Sightless in the darksome forest dwells the monarch faint and weak,
Grant him sight and grant him vigor, Yama, in thy mercy speak!"

" Duteous daughter," Yama answered, " be thy pious wishes given,
And his eyes shall be restoréd to the cheerful light of heaven,

Turn, Savitri, faint and weary, follow not in fruitless woe,
And no farther living creature may with monarch Yama go! "

" Faint nor weary is Savitri," so the noble princess said,
" Since she waits upon her husband, gracious Monarch of the dead,

What befalls the wedded husband still befalls the faithful wife,
Where he leads she ever follows, be it death or be it life!

And our sacred writ ordaineth and our pious *rishis* sing,
Transient meeting with the holy doth its countless blessings bring,

Longer friendship with the holy purifies the mortal birth,
Lasting union with the holy is the bright sky on the earth,

Union with the pure and holy is immortal heavenly life,
For Eternal Law divides not loving man and faithful wife! "

" Blessed are thy words," said Yama, " blessed is thy pious thought,
With a higher purer wisdom are thy holy lessons fraught,

I would bless thee, fair Savitri, but the dead come not to life,
Ask for other boon and blessing, faithful true and virtuous wife! "

" Since you so permit me, Yama," so the good Savitri said,
" Once more for my husband's father be my supplication made,

Lost his kingdom, in the forest dwells the monarch faint and weak,
Grant him back his wealth and kingdom, Yama, in thy mercy speak! "

" Loving daughter," Yama answered, " wealth and kingdom I bestow,
Turn, Savitri, living mortal may not with King Yama go! "

Still Savitri, meek and faithful, followed her departed lord,
Yama still with higher wisdom listened to her saintly word,

And the Sable King was vanquished, and he turned on her again,
And his words fell on Savitri like the cooling summer rain,

"Noble woman, speak thy wishes, name thy boon and purpose high,
What the pious mortal asketh gods in heaven may not deny!"

"Thou hast," so Savitri answered, "granted father's realm and
might,
To his vain and sightless eyeballs hast restored their blessed sight,

Grant him that the line of monarchs may not all untimely end,
Satyavan may see his kingdom to his royal sons descend!"

"Have thy object," answered Yama, "and thy lord shall live again,
He shall live to be a father, and his children too shall reign,

For a woman's troth abideth longer than the fleeting breath,
And a woman's love abideth higher than the doom of Death!"

*Romesh Chunder Dutt*

## HERD OF WILD ELEPHANTS ATTACKS THE CARAVAN

There in the quiet of the middle night
Deep slumbered these, when sudden on them fell
A herd of elephants, thirsting to drink;
In rut, the mada oozing from their heads;
And when those great beasts spied the caravan
And smelled the tame cows of their kind, they rushed
Headlong and mad with must, o'erwhelming all,
In onset vast and irresistible.

As when from some tall peak into the plain
Thunder and smoke and crash the rolling rocks,
Through splintered stems and thorns so breaking a way,
On swept the herd to where, beside the pool,
Those sleepers lay, and trampled them to earth,
Half risen, helpless, shrieking in the dark
"Haha! the elephants." Of those unslain,
Some in the thickets sought a shelter; some,

Yet dazed with sleep, stood panic-stricken, mute;
Till, here with tusks and there with trunks, the beasts
Gored them and battered them and trod them flat
Under their monstrous feet. Then might be seen
Camels with camel-drivers perishing,
And men flying in fear who struck at men;
Terror and death and clamor everywhere:
While some, despairing, cast themselves to earth;
And some, in fleeing, fell and died; and some
Climbed to the tree-tops. Thus on every side
Scattered and ruined was that caravan,
Cattle and merchants, by the herd assailed.

*Sir Edwin Arnold*

## ON THE TRANSIENCE OF HUMAN LIFE

1

Even as log and log meet for a moment on the mighty ocean,
And meeting part again,
So are the unions of mortals.

2

As the streams of the rivers go on,
Nor ever return,
So day and night bear ever away
The life of mortals.

*A. Berriedale Keith*

## SELFISHNESS

Who more inhuman lives than he,
Of dainty food who eats the best,
In rich attire is always drest,
And stints his helpless family?

*J. Muir*

## GOOD TO BE DRAWN FROM EVERYTHING

From madmen's ravings even, the wise,
And children's prattlings, good may gain;
As workmen skilled extract the vein
Of gold in rocks that bedded lies.

*J. Muir*

## MUTABILITY OF THINGS HUMAN

In scatterings end collections all;
High towering piles at last must fall;
In parting every meeting ends;
To death all life of creatures tends.

*J. Muir*

FROM THE

# "RAMAYANA"

*by Valmiki (about 500 B.C.)*

## RAMA AND HIS WIFE SITA, BANISHED BY KAIKEYI, PUT ON THE HERMIT'S COAT OF BARK

The hero took it from her hand, and threw
His own fine robe upon the ground, and drew
The rough bark mantle on. So Lakshman braced,
His dress removed, the bark around his waist.

But modest Sita, in her silks arrayed,
Eyed the strange mantle trembling and afraid:
As from Kaikeyi's hand the coat she took,
She viewed it with a startled wondering look,
As, in the brake beside the stream, a deer
Looks at the hunter's snare with doubt and fear.

With weeping eyes, like a poor bleating lamb
That runs with trembling feet to find its dam,
She nestled closely to her Rama's side,
And in her soft low faltering accents cried:

*As the name "Ramayana" indicates, Rama is its hero, and Sita, his wife, its heroine. Sita is carried off by the demon Ravan, but after many adventures and an epic war, Rama recaptures her and reigns gloriously in a sort of "golden age." An epilogue gives the poem an unhappy ending. Its author, Valmiki, is often referred to as "the first poet," and later Sanskrit poetry follows the tradition set by the "Ramayana" much more closely than the more heroic mood of the "Mahabharata."*

"Tell me how hermits, dwelling in the wood,
Tie their bark mantles on." Perplext she stood,
Shrinking in modest dread, while one small hand
Strove at the neck to join the rugged band.

*Ralph T. H. Griffith*

## RAVAN THE GIANT CASTS EYES OF DESIRE ON SITA, WIFE OF THE HERO RAMA

Ravan watched the happy moment burning with a vengeful spite,
Came to sad and sorrowing Sita in the guise of anchorite,

Tufted hair and russet garment, sandals on his feet he wore,
And depending from his shoulders on a staff his vessel bore.

And he came to lonely Sita, for each warlike chief was gone,
As the darkness comes to evening lightless from the parted sun,

And he cast his eyes on Sita, as a *graha* casts its shade
On the beauteous star Rohini when the bright moon's glories fade.

Ravan fired by impure passion fixed on her his lustful eye,
And the light that lit his glances gave his holy texts the lie,

Ravan in his flattering accents, with a soft and soothing art,
Praised the woman's peerless beauty to subdue the woman's heart.

"Smiling lips that tempt and ravish, luster that thy dark eyes beam,
Crush my heart, as rolling waters crush the margin of the stream,

And thy wealth of waving tresses mantles o'er thy budding charms,
And thy waist of slender beauty courts a lover's circling arms!

* * *

Many queens of queenly beauty on the royal Ravan wait,
Thou shalt be their reigning empress, thou shalt own my regal state!

And five thousand gay-dressed damsels shall upon my Sita wait,
Queen of Ravan's true affection, proud partaker of his state! "

Sparkled Sita's eyes in anger and a tremor shook her frame,
As in proud and scornful accents answered thus the royal dame:

" Knowest thou Rama great and godlike, peerless hero in the strife,
Deep, uncompassed, like the ocean? — I am Rama's wedded wife!

Knowest thou Rama proud and princely, sinless in his saintly life,
Stately as the tall *Nyagrodha?* — I am Rama's wedded wife!

Mighty-arméd, mighty-chested, mighty with his bow and sword,
Lion midst the sons of mortals — Rama is my wedded lord!

Stainless as the moon in glory, stainless in his deed and word,
Rich in valour and in virtue — Rama is my wedded lord!

Sure thy fitful life is shadowed by a dark and dreadful fate,
Since in frenzy of thy passion courtest thou a warrior's mate,

Tear the tooth of hungry lion while upon the calf he feeds,
Touch the fang of deadly cobra while his dying victim bleeds,

Aye uproot the solid mountain from its base of rocky land,
Ere thou win the wife of Rama stout of heart and strong of hand!

Pierce thy eye with point of needle till it racks thy tortured head,
Press thy red tongue cleft and bleeding on the razor's shining blade,

Hurl thyself upon the ocean from a towering peak and high,
Snatch the orbs of day and midnight from their spheres in azure sky,

Tongues of flaming conflagration in thy flowing dress enfold,
Ere thou take the wife of Rama to thy distant dungeon hold,

Ere thou seek to insult Rama unrelenting in his wrath,
O'er a bed of pikes of iron tread a softer easier path! "

*Romesh Chunder Dutt*

## RAVAN USES FORCE

He ceased; and, changing all his gentle guise,
Stood before Sita in his native size,
A monstrous giant, terrible in form,
Dark as a thunder-cloud that leads the storm.
Ten-faced and twenty-armed, in every head
Glared the wild eyeballs that his rage made red,
As with a scowl upon each haughty brow,
He cried: "Fair Sita, wilt thou scorn me now?
Lift thy sweet eyes, dear child of earth, and see
A husband worthy of a queen like thee."

One eager hand her glorious tresses grasped,
One mighty arm around her waist was clasped.
Aid her, ye spirits! Ah, all wild with dread
Each nymph and faun before the fiend had fled.
Where, where is Rama? Rama roams afar,
And Ravan bears her to his magic car.

* * *

Down to her feet her loosened tresses hung,
As, like a creeper, with twined arms she clung
To bough and branch, and falling on her knees
Shrieked out for succour to the mighty trees.

Then Ravan's giant hand, unused to spare,
Seized her again by her long flowing hair:
Vengeance on thee that cursed touch shall bring,
And stain with gore thy hair, thou impious king.

All nature trembled, faint and sick with dread,
And sudden darkness o'er the world was spread;
In vain she struggled, as the giant threw
His arm around her waist and upward flew.
With yellow robes, far floating uncontrolled,
And fair limbs glowing like the burnished gold,
The royal lady like the lightning shone,
Too dazzling lovely to be looked upon.

Touched by the glorious light the giant's frame
Showed like a mountain belted round with flame;
And from the lotus wreath that crowned her head
Light falling petals on his limbs were shed.

Widowed of Rama and of joy, her face
Peered in its lovely sadness from the embrace
Of her fell ravisher. So looks the moon
With pure light cleaving a dark cloud in June.

*Ralph T. H. Griffith*

## RAMA SEARCHES FOR HIS LOST LOVE

. . . . . But he found her not;
Lonely and empty was the leafy cot,
Like a sad streamlet in the winter's frost
With all the glory of its lilies lost.
He searched, he called: no answering voice was heard,
But a faint shudder that the branches stirred . . .

*Ralph T. H. Griffith*

## IN RAVAN'S PALACE THE WOMEN SLEEP

In sweet disorder lay a throng
Weary of dance and play and song:
Where heedless girls had sunk to rest,
One pillowed on another's breast,
Her tender cheek scarce seen beneath
Red roses of the falling wreath,
The while her long soft hair concealed
The beauties that her friend revealed.
With limbs at random interlaced
Round arm and leg and throat and waist,
That wreath of women lay asleep
Like blossoms in a careless heap.

*Ralph T. H. Griffith*

## FROM THE
# "CODE OF MANU"

*fourth century* B.C.

*by an Unknown Author*

### DUTIES OF WOMEN

In childhood must a father guard his daughter;
In youth the husband shields his wife; in age
A mother is protected by her sons —
Ne'er should a woman lean upon herself.

Drink, bad companions, absence from her lord,
Rambling about, unseasonable sleep,
Dwelling in others' houses, let her shun —
These are six things that tarnish women's fame.

*Monier Monier-Williams*

## WISDOM FROM THE "PANCHATANTRA"

*first collected about 200 B.C.*

*by Unknown Authors*

1

In houses where no snakes are found,
One sleeps; or where the snakes are bound:
But perfect rest is hard to win
With serpents bobbing out and in.

2

Caress a rascal as you will,
He was and is a rascal still:
All salve- and sweating-treatments fail
To take the kink from doggy's tail.

3

Scholarship is less than sense;
Therefore seek intelligence.

4

For lost and dead and past
The wise have no laments:
Between the wise and fools
Is just this difference.

*The collector of the folk tales of the "Panchatantra," which have been said to be "the most widely read stories in the world," is unknown, as are the authors of the separate stories, many of which were already ancient when the collection was made. This may have been in Kashmir about 200 B.C. The verses given here are inserted in the prose text, as verses are inserted in the tales of the "Arabian Nights."*

5

On hours of talk or squabbling rude,
Of physic, barber, flirting, food,
A gentleman does not intrude.

6

Some things a man should tell his wife,
Some things to friend and some to son;
All these are trusted. He should not
Tell everything to everyone.

7

Who ever saw or heard
A gambler's truthful word,
A neat and cleanly crow,
A woman going slow
In love, a kindly snake,
A eunuch's pluck awake,
A drunkard's love of science,
A king in friend's alliance?

8

Some eat the countries; these are kings;
The doctors, those whom sickness stings;
The merchants, those who buy their things;
And learnéd men, the fools.

The married are the clergy's meat;
The thieves devour the indiscreet;
The flirts their eager lovers eat;
And Labor eats us all.

9

'Tis only saints in youth
That can be saints in truth:
Ah, who is not a saint
When ebbing passions faint?

10

Learn science with the gods above
Or imps in nether space,
Yet women's wit will rival it:
How keep them in their place?

Behold the faults with woman born:
Impurity, and heartless scorn,
Untruth, and folly, reckless heat,
Excessive greediness, deceit.

Be not enslaved by women's charm,
Nor wish them growth in power to harm:
Their slaves, of manly feeling stripped,
Are tame, pet crows whose wings are clipped.

Honey in a woman's words,
Poison in her breast:
So, although you taste her lip,
Drub her on the chest.

11

A hundred benefits are lost,
If lavished on the mean;
A hundred epigrams, with their
True relevance unseen;
A hundred counsels, when a life
Obeys no rigid rule;
A hundred cogent arguments
Are lost upon a fool.

12

Even a pearl, so smoothly hard and round,
Is fastened by a thread and safely bound,
After a way to pierce its heart is found.

*Arthur W. Ryder*

# THE DRAMATIC POETS

*300–700* A.D.

## LINES FROM A DRAMA

*by Bhasa* (*about* 300 A.D.)

1

### A Toper's Beatitude

Blessed are those that are drunk with drink,
Blessed are those that are soaked with drink;
Blessed are those that are washed with drink,
Blessed are those that are choked with drink!

2

### Praise of the Moon

When its rays fall on its cheeks the cat licks them,
thinking them milk;
When they are caught in the cleft of a tree
the elephant deems them a lotus;
When they rest on the couch of lovers the maiden seizes them,
saying, "'Tis my robe;"
The moon in truth, proud of its brilliance, doth lead astray
all this world.

*A. Berriedale Keith*

## TWO FRAGMENTS FROM "SVAPNA-VASAVADATTA," A DRAMA

*by Bhasa*

1

So, lady, come with me. This way; this way.
Now all the birds are quiet in their nests;
The hermits lave themselves in limpid streams;
The lit fires twinkle, and their smoke pervades
The sacred grove. The sun, with beams subdued,
Swerving his car from his long course aslant,
Sinks slowly down towards the western mount.

2

. . . . . Look, look, my lord!
That line of cranes in the clear autumn sky
In steady flight, long, white and lovely, like
Baldeo's outstretched arm!
Yes, friend, I see it.
Now straight, now broken, undulating now,
Now bending like the shape of the Great Bear,
The line is stretched athwart the lower sky
Which is as clear as a snake's skin new sloughed.

Look, look, my lady, at that line of cranes
In steady flight. 'Tis white and lovely like
A wreath of water-lilies. . . .

*A. G. Shirreff* and *Panna Lall*

## FRAGMENTS FROM "SAKUNTALA," A DRAMA

*by Kalidasa (about 400 A.D.)*

### 1

SONG

In the dusk, as it falls
On the last golden hour,
The enamoured maiden
Takes a honeyed flower,

A flower the bees kiss,
Part and kiss, hovering near;
Its tendrils light as finger-tips
She twines about her ear.

### 2

SAKUNTALA AND THE WOOD-NYMPHS OF THE GARDEN

HARITA (*entering with costly presents*)

Lo, there was hanging from a certain tree
A robe of finest linen, as if those
Who wove it had assured the wearer bliss;

*India has long held Kalidasa to be the greatest of her poets. Yet, such is the Indian lack of interest in historical detail, that, although his work was already popular in his own day, we know virtually nothing of his life. His very century is in doubt. He seems to have lived in the city of Ujjain, in west-central India and to have been one of the "nine gems" of the court of a king known only as Vikramaditya, or "Sun of Valour," who has never been historically identified. He seems also to have travelled rather extensively throughout India. Beyond this we know virtually nothing, though numerous legends exist concerning him. His work, which has been practically all preserved, consists of three dramas, two narrative poems of some length, and a purely lyric poem of 115 stanzas, the "Cloud Messenger."*

Never was moon so white. Another stem
Oozed from its bark droppings of rosy juice
For the staining of her feet; and from another
Wood-nymphs were stretching out their little hands,
Far as the wrist, slender as shoots of spring,
To offer her bright ornaments, all gold.

* * *

KANWA

Hither, Sakuntala, come hither; pace
With pure feet round the sacrificial fire.

Now let the fire upon the altar
From the sacred hearth that's taken
And fed with logs of hallowed wood
And with grass all round it shaken,
Let the fire assoiling
With its holy glow
Of burnt offerings' piercing odour
Purify thee now!

Hearken, you neighbor trees of the holy grove.
She who would never seek to quench her thirst
Before she had refreshed your thirsty roots,
Who, tho' she loved ornaments, never plucked
One flower of yours, because of love for you,
Whose time of joy was your young burst of bloom,
She, even she, Sakuntala, departs.
With kindness, all of you, and tender breathings
Out of your branches comfort her farewell.

(*A Koïl sings*)

SARNGARAVA

Father, the trees are answering your prayer
In bird notes, cooing comfort and sweet boon,
Singing their farewell to Sakuntala,
Their sister, nurtured in their own green grove.

(*Invisible being sings*)

May many a pool about her path refresh her wandering eye
Vivid with lazy lotus-leaves; may happy trees on high
Temper the noon, and sultry light a breezy shadow sift,
The dust beneath her feet be soft as lotus-pollen drift;
Her path be cheered with favoring airs and resting places find
At evening laid in pleasantness and altogether kind.

(*All stand listening in wonder*)

GAUTAMI

My daughter, hark, nymphs of the grove that love you
As their own kind, sing blessings on your journey.
Make your obeisance to these holy nymphs.

(*Sakuntala makes obeisance*)

*Laurence Binyon,*
after *Kedar Nath Das Gupta*

### He Is Loathe to Go

My limbs move forward, while my heart flies back,
Like silken standard borne against the breeze.

*Arthur A. Macdonell*

## FROM "THE DYNASTY OF RAGHU"
*by Kalidasa*

I

### The King's Joy in His Son

The king drank pleasure from him late and soon
With eyes that stared like windless lotus-flowers;
Unselfish joy expanded all his powers
As swells the sea responsive to the moon.

The rooted love that filled each parent's soul
For the other, deep as bird's love for the mate,
Was now divided with the boy; and straight
The remaining half proved greater than the whole.

He learned the reverence that befits a boy;
Following the nurse's words, began to talk;
And clinging to her finger, learned to walk;
These childish lessons stretched his father's joy,

Who clasped the baby to his breast, and thrilled
To feel the nectar-touch upon his skin,
Half closed his eyes, the father's bliss to win
Which, more for long delay, his being filled.

The baby hair must needs be clipped; yet he
Retained two dangling locks, his cheeks to fret;
And down the river of the alphabet
He swam, with other boys, to learning's sea.

Religion's rites, and what good learning suits
A prince, he had from teachers old and wise;
Not theirs the pain of barren enterprise,
For effort spent on good material, fruits.

2

From "Aja's Lament over His Dead Wife"

Through all the years, dear, you would not reprove me,
Though I offended. Can you go away
Sudden, without a word? I know you love me,
And I have not offended you to-day.

You surely thought me faithless, to be banished
As light-of-love and gambler, from your life,
Because without a farewell word, you vanished
And never will return, sweet-smiling wife.

Your bee-black hair from which the flowers are peeping,
Dear, wavy hair that I have loved so well,
Stirs in the wind until I think you sleeping,
Soon to return and make my glad heart swell.

Your low, sweet voice to nightingales was given;
Your idly graceful movement to the swans;

Your grace to fluttering vines, dear wife in heaven;
Your trustful, wide-eyed glances to the fawns:

You left your charms on earth, that I, reminded
By them, might be consoled though you depart;
But vainly! Far from you, by sorrow blinded,
I find no prop of comfort for my heart.

Joy's sun is down, all love is fallen and perished,
The song of life is sung, the spring is dead,
Gone is the use of gems that once you cherished,
And empty, ever empty, is my bed.

You were my comrade gay, my home, my treasure,
You were my bosom's friend, in all things true,
My best-loved pupil in the arts of pleasure:
Stern death took all I had in taking you.

Still am I king, and rich in kingly fashion,
Yet lacking you, am poor the long years through;
I cannot now be won to any passion,
For all my passions centered, dear, in you.

*Arthur W. Ryder*

## FROM "THE BIRTH OF THE WAR-GOD"

*by Kalidasa*

### Ill Omens Presage the Death of the Demons

For foul birds came, a horrid flock to see,
Above the army of the foes of heaven,
And dimmed the sun, awaiting ravenously
The feast of demon corpses to be given.

And monstrous snakes, as black as powdered soot,
Spitting hot poison high into the air,
Brought terror to the army underfoot,
And crept and coiled and crawled before them there.

The sun a sickly halo round him had;
Coiling within it frightened eyes could see
Great, writhing serpents, enviously glad
Because the demon's death so soon should be.

And in the very circle of the sun
Were phantom jackals, snarling to be fed;
And with impatient haste they seemed to run
To drink the demon's blood in battle shed.

There fell, with darting flame and blinding flash
Lighting the farthest heavens, from on high
A thunderbolt whose agonizing crash
Brought fear and shuddering from a cloudless sky.

There came a pelting rain of blazing coals
With blood and bones of dead men mingled in;
Smoke and weird flashes horrified their souls;
The sky was dusty gray like asses' skin.

*Arthur W. Ryder*

## FROM "THE CLOUD-MESSENGER"

*by Kalidasa*

(*The comments are by the translator.*)

*A Yaksha, or divine attendant on Kubera, god of wealth, is exiled for a year from his home in the Himalayas. As he dwells on a peak in the Vindhya range, half India separates him from his young bride.*

On Rama's shady peak where hermits roam,
Mid streams by Sita's bathing sanctified,
An erring Yaksha made his hapless home,
Doomed by his master humbly to abide,
And spend a long, long year of absence from his bride.

*After eight months of growing emaciation, the first cloud warns him of the approach of the rainy season, when neglected brides are wont to pine and die.*

Some months were gone; the lonely lover's pain
Had loosened his golden bracelet day by day
Ere he beheld the harbinger of rain,
A cloud that charged the peak in mimic fray,
As an elephant attacks a bank of earth in play.

Before this cause of lovers' hopes and fears
Long time Kubera's bondman sadly bowed
In meditation, choking down his tears —
Even happy hearts thrill strangely to the cloud;
To him, poor wretch, the loved embrace was disallowed.

*Unable to send tidings otherwise of his health and unchanging love, he resolves to make the cloud his messenger.*

Longing to save his darling's life, unblest
With joyous tidings, through the rainy days,
He plucked fresh blossoms for his cloudy guest,
Such homage as a welcoming comrade pays,
And bravely spoke brave words of greeting and of praise.

O cloud, the parching spirit stirs thy pity;
My bride is far, through royal wrath and might;
Bring her my message to the Yaksha city,
Rich-gardened Alaka, where radiance bright
From Shiva's crescent bathes the palaces in light.

While favoring breezes waft thee gently forth,
And while upon thy left the plover sings
His proud, sweet song, the cranes who know thy worth
Will meet thee in the sky on joyful wings
And for delights anticipated join their rings.

*He assures the cloud that his bride is neither dead nor faithless.*

Yet hasten, O my brother, till thou see —
Counting the days that bring the lonely smart —
The faithful wife who only lives for me:
A drooping flower is woman's loving heart,
Upheld by the stem of hope when two true lovers part.

*He then describes the long journey.*

Learn first, O cloud, the road that thou must go,
Then hear my message ere thou speed away;
Before thee mountains rise and rivers flow:
When thou art weary, on the mountains stay,
And when exhausted, drink the river's spray.

(*Here follows a description of the route the cloud must follow across India, which is reluctantly omitted. The following stanzas must serve as a sample. Ed.*)

*The Ganges River, which originates in heaven. Its fall is broken by the head of Shiva, who stands on the Himalaya Mountains; otherwise the shock would be too great for the earth. But Shiva's goddess-bride is displeased.*

Fly then where Ganges o'er the king of mountains
Falls like a flight of stairs from heaven let down
For the sons of men; she hurls her billowy fountains
Like hands to grasp the moon on Shiva's crown
And laughs her foamy laugh at Gauri's jealous frown.

*The dark cloud is permitted to mingle with the clear stream of Ganges, as the muddy Jumna River does near the city now called Allahabad.*

If thou, like some great elephant of the sky,
Shouldst wish from heaven's eminence to bend
And taste the crystal stream, her beauties high —
As thy dark shadows with her whiteness blend —
Would be what Jumna's waters at Prayaga lend.

*The magnificent Himalaya range.*

Her birthplace is Himalaya's rocky crest
Whereon the scent of musk is never lost,
For deer rest ever there where thou wilt rest
Somber against the peak with whiteness glossed,
Like dark earth by the snow-white bull of Shiva tossed.

If, born from friction of the deodars,
A scudding fire should prove the mountain's bane,
Singeing the tails of yaks with fiery stars,
Quench thou the flame with countless streams of rain —
The great have power that they may soothe distress and pain.

Like powder black and soft I seem to see
Thine outline on the mountain slope as bright
As new-sawn tusks of stainless ivory;
No eye could wink before so fair a sight
As dark-blue robes upon the Ploughman's shoulder white.

I doubt not that celestial maidens sweet
With pointed bracelet gems will prick thee there
To make of thee a shower-bath in the heat;
Frighten the playful girls if they should dare
To keep thee longer, friend, with thunder's harshest blare.

*The cloud's destination, the splendid heavenly city Alaka.*

Where palaces in much may rival thee —
Their ladies gay, thy lightning's dazzling powers —
Symphonic drums, thy thunder's melody —
Their bright mosaic floors, thy silver showers —
Thy rainbow, paintings, and thy height, cloud-licking towers.

*Here grows the magic tree which yields whatever is desired.*

Where men with maids whose charm no blemish mars
Climb to the open crystal balcony
Inlaid with flower-like sparkling of the stars,
And drink the love-wine from the wishing-tree,
And listen to the drums' deep-thundering dignity.

Where maidens whom the gods would gladly wed
Are fanned by breezes cool with Ganges' spray
In shadows that the trees of heaven spread;
In golden sands at hunt-the-pearl they play,
Bury their little fists, and draw them void away.

Where lovers' passion-trembling fingers cling
To silken robes whose sashes flutter wide,
The knots undone; and red-lipped women fling,
Silly with shame, their rouge from side to side,
Hoping in vain the flash of jeweled lamps to hide.

*Here are the stones from which drops of water ooze when the moon shines on them.*

Where from the moonstones hung in nets of thread
Great drops of water trickle in the night —
When the moon shines clear and thou, O cloud, art fled —
To ease the languors of the women's plight
Who lie relaxed and tired in love's embraces tight.

*Where is the home of the unhappy Yaksha,*

There, northward from the master's palace, see
Our home, whose rainbow-gateway shines afar;
And near it grows a little coral-tree,
Bending 'neath many a blossom's clustered star,
Loved by my bride as children of adoption are.

*its two favorite trees, which will not blossom while their mistress is grieving;*

The ashoka-tree, with sweetly dancing lines,
The favorite bakul-tree, are near the bower
Of amaranth-engirdled jasmine-vines;
Like me, they wait to feel the winning power
Of her persuasion, ere they blossom into flower.

*its tame peacock;*

A golden pole is set between the pair,
With crystal perch above its emerald bands
As green as young bamboo; at sunset there
Thy friend, the blue-necked peacock, rises, stands,
And dances when she claps her bracelet-tinkling hands.

*and its painted emblems of the god of wealth.*

These are the signs — recall them o'er and o'er,
My clever friend — by which the house is known,
And the Conch and Lotus painted by the door:
Alas! when I am far, the charm is gone —
The lotus' loveliness is lost with set of sun.

Small as the elephant cub thou must become
For easy entrance; rest where gems enhance
The glory of the hill beside my home,
And peep into the house with lightning-glance,
And make its brightness dim as fireflies' twinkling dance.

*The Yaksha's bride.*

The supremest woman from God's workshop gone —
Young, slender; little teeth and red, red lips,
Slight waist and gentle eyes of timid fawn,
An idly graceful movement, generous hips,
Fair bosom into which the sloping shoulder slips —

Like a bird that mourns her absent mate anew
Passing these heavy days in longings keen,
My girlish wife whose words are sweet and few,
My second life, shall there of thee be seen —
But changed like winter-blighted lotus-blooms, I ween.

Her eyes are swollen with tears that stream unchidden;
Her lips turn pale with sorrow's burning sighs;
The face that rests upon her hand is hidden
By hanging curls, as when the glory dies
Of the suffering moon pursued by thee through nightly skies.

Resting one side upon that widowed bed,
Like the slender moon upon the Eastern height,
So slender she, now worn with anguish dread,
Passing with stifling tears the long, sad night
Which, spent in love with me, seemed but a moment's flight.

On the cool, sweet moon that through the lattice flashes
She looks with the old delight, then turns away
And veils her eyes with water-weighted lashes,
Sad as the flower that blooms in sunlight gay,
But cannot wake nor slumber on a cloudy day.

The delicate body, weak and suffering,
Quite unadorned and tossing to and fro
In oft-renewing wretchedness, will wring
Even from thee a raindrop-tear, I know —
Soft breasts like thine are pitiful to others' woe.

*Quivering of the eyelids*

Her hanging hair prevents the twinkling shine
Of fawn-eyes that forget their glances sly,
Lost to the friendly aid of rouge and wine —
Yet the eyelids quiver when thou drawest nigh
As water-lilies do when fish go scurrying by,

*and trembling of the limbs are omens of speedy union with the beloved.*

And limbs that thrill to thee thy welcome prove,
Limbs fair as stems in some rich plantain-bower,
No longer showing marks of my rough love,
Robbed of their cooling pearls by fatal power,
The limbs which I was wont to soothe in passion's hour.

But if she should be lost in happy sleep,
Wait, bear with her, grant her but three hours' grace,
And thunder not, O cloud, but let her keep
The dreaming vision of her lover's face —
Loose not too soon the imagined knot of that embrace.

As thou wouldst wake the jasmine's budding wonder,
Wake her with breezes blowing mistily;
Conceal thy lightnings, and with words of thunder
Speak boldly, though she answer haughtily
With eyes that fasten on the lattice and on thee.

*The cloud is instructed how to announce himself*

"Thou art no widow; for thy husband's friend
Is come to tell thee what himself did say —
A cloud with low, sweet thunder-tones that send
All weary wanderers hastening on their way,
Eager to loose the braids of wives that lonely stay."

*in such a way as to win the favor of his auditor.*

Say this, and she will welcome thee indeed,
Sweet friend, with a yearning heart's tumultuous beating
And joy-uplifted eyes; and she will heed
The after message: such a friendly greeting
Is hardly less to woman's heart than lovers' meeting.

*The message itself.*

Thus too, my king, I pray of thee to speak,
Remembering kindness is its own reward;
"Thy lover lives, and from the holy peak
Asks if these absent days good health afford —
Those born to pain must ever use this opening word.

With body worn as thine, with pain as deep,
With tears and ceaseless longings answering thine,
With sighs more burning than the sighs that keep
Thy lips ascorch — doomed far from thee to pine,
He too doth weave the fancies that thy soul entwine.

He used to love, when women friends were near,
To whisper things he might have said aloud
That he might touch thy face and kiss thine ear;
Unheard and even unseen, no longer proud,
He now must send this yearning message by a cloud.

'I see thy limbs in graceful-creeping vines,
Thy glances in the eyes of gentle deer,
Thine eyebrows in the ripple's dancing lines,
Thy locks in plumes, thy face in moonlight clear —
Ah, jealous! But the whole sweet image is not here.

And when I toss my arms to clasp thee tight,
Mine own though but in visions of a dream —
They who behold the oft-repeated sight,
The kind divinities of wood and stream,
Let fall great pearly tears that on the blossoms gleam.

Oh, might the long, long night seem short to me!
Oh, might the day his hourly tortures hide!
Such longings for the things that cannot be,
Consume my helpless heart, sweet-glancing bride,
In burning agonies of absence from thy side.

*The bride is besought not to lose heart at hearing of her lover's wretchedness,*

Yet much reflection, dearest, makes me strong,
Strong with an inner strength; nor shouldst thou feel
Despair at what has come to us of wrong;
Who has unending woe or lasting weal?
Our fates move up and down upon a circling wheel.

*and to remember that the curse has its appointed end, when the rainy season is over and the year of exile fulfilled. Vishnu spends the rainy months in sleep upon the back of the cosmic serpent Shesha.*

When Vishnu rises from his serpent bed
The curse is ended; close thine eyelids tight
And wait till only four months more are sped;
Then we shall taste each long-desired delight
Through nights that the full autumn moon illumines bright."

*The Yaksha then begs the cloud to return with a message of comfort,*

Console her patient heart, to breaking full
In our first separation; having spoken,
Fly from the mountain ploughed by Shiva's bull;
Make strong with message and with tender token
My life, so easily, like morning jasmines, broken.

I hope, sweet friend, thou grantest all my suit,
Nor read refusal in thy solemn air;
When thirsty birds complain, thou givest mute
The rain from heaven: such simple hearts are rare,
Whose only answer is fulfilment of the prayer.

*and dismisses him, with a prayer for his welfare.*

Thus, though I pray unworthy, answer me
For friendship's sake, or pity's, magnified
By the sight of my distress; then wander free
In rainy loveliness, and ne'er abide
One moment's separation from thy lightning bride.

*Arthur W. Ryder*

*The above is a condensed version, about one third the length of the original.*

## FRAGMENTS FROM "VIKRAMA AND URVASI," A DRAMA

*by Kalidasa*

### I

URVASI HAS FAINTED

Have patience; she recovers, though but faintly.
So gently steals the moon upon the night
Retiring tardily; so peeps the flame

Of evening fires through smoky wreaths; and thus
The Ganges slowly clears her troubled wave,
Engulfs the ruin that the tumbling bank
Had hurled across her agitated course,
And flows a clear and stately stream again.

2

HEAT OF THE DAY

'Tis past midday. Exhausted by the heat
The peacock plunges in the scanty pool
That feeds the tall tree's root: the drowsy bee
Sleeps in the hollow chamber of the lotus
Darkened with closing petals: on the brink
Of the now tepid lake the wild duck lurks
Amongst the sedgy shade; and even here,
The parrot from his wiry bower complains,
And calls for water to allay his thirst.

*H. H. Wilson*

## THE HUNTRESS

*attributed to Kalidasa*

This maiden like a huntsman is;
Her brow is like the bow he bends;
Her sidelong glances are his darts;
My heart's the antelope she slays.

*Arthur A. Macdonell*

## FROM "MRCCHAKATIKA," OR "THE LITTLE CLAY CART," A DRAMA

*by an Unknown Author, although signed "King Sudraka"*

(*sixth century* A.D.)

CONCERNING CHARUDATTA

Fool! I will tell you who Charudatta is.
A tree of life to them whose sorrows grow,

Beneath its fruit of virtue bending low;
Father to good men; virtue's touchstone he;
The mirror of the learned; and the sea
Where all the tides of character unite;
A righteous man, whom pride could never blight;
A treasure-house, with human virtues stored;
Courtesy's essence, honour's precious hoard.
He doth to life its fullest meaning give,
So good is he; we others breathe, not live.

*Arthur W. Ryder*

### Charudatta On His Poverty

Had I the choice,
Death, and not poverty, were my election.
To die is transient suffering; to be poor,
Interminable anguish.

* * *

. . . I think not of my wasted fortune.
As fate decrees, so riches come and vanish.
But I lament to find the love of friends
Hangs all unstrung because a man is poor.
And then with poverty comes disrespect;
From disrespect does self-dependence fail,
Then scorn and sorrow, following, overwhelm
The intellect; and when the judgment fails
The being perishes; and thus from poverty
Each ill that pains humanity proceeds.

*H. H. Wilson*

### On Resignation

A bullock greedy for a feast of corn
You never can prevent;
A wife who wants her lord to wear a horn
You never can prevent;
A man who loves to gamble night and morn
You never can prevent;
And blemishes that with a man are born
You never can prevent.

*Arthur W. Ryder*

### On the Storm

As dark as Vishnu's form, with circling cranes
To trumpet him, instead of bugle strains,
And garmented in lightning's silken robe,
Approaches now the harbinger of rains.

When lightning's lamp is lit, the silver river
Impetuous falls from out the cloudy womb;
Like severed lace from heaven-cloaking gloom,
It gleams an instant, then is gone forever.

Like shoaling fishes, or like dolphins shy,
Or like to swans, toward heaven's vault that fly,
Like paired flamingos, male and mate together,
Like mighty pinnacles that tower on high,
In thousand forms the tumbling clouds embrace,
Though torn by winds, they gather, interlace,
And paint the ample canvas of the sky.

*Arthur W. Ryder*

### The Court of Justice

The prospect is but little pleasing.
The court looks like a sea; its councillors
Are deep engulfed in thought; its tossing waves
Are wrangling advocates; its brood of monsters
Are these wild animals[1] — death's ministers —
Attorneys skim like wily snakes the surface —
Spies are the shellfish cowering 'midst its weeds,
And vile informers, like the hovering curlew
Hang fluttering o'er, then pounce upon their prey:
The beach, that should be justice, is unsafe,
Rough, rude, and broken by oppression's storms.

*H. H. Wilson*

[1] The wild animals are elephants and horses employed to tread or tear condemned criminals to death.

## LINES FROM A DRAMA

*by King Harsa (reigned 606–648 A.D.)*

Stay, stay, fire;
Cease thy constant smoke;
Why dost thou raise aloft thy circle of flames?
What canst thou avail against me,
Whom the fire of severance from my belovéd,
Fierce as the flame that shall consume the universe,
Could not consume?

*A. Berriedale Keith*

## FROM "RATNAVALI," OR "THE PEARL NECKLACE," A DRAMA

*attributed to King Harsa*

### Twilight Passes

Our minds intent upon the festival,
We saw not that the twilight passed away:
Behold, the east proclaims the lord of night
Still hidden by the mountain where he rises,
Even as a maiden by her pale face shows
That in her inmost heart a lover dwells.

*Arthur A. Macdonell*

## FRAGMENTS FROM "UTTARARAMA-CARITA," A DRAMA

*by Bhavabhuti (about 700 A.D.)*

### I

### Rama Laments

As slowly and gently, cheek pressed against cheek,
We whispered soft nothings,

Each clasping the other with warm embrace,
The night,
Whose watches had sped unnoticed,
Came to an end.

2

RAMA, WATCHING SITA ASLEEP, SPEAKS

She is Fortune herself in my home;
She is a pencil of ambrosia for the eyes;
Her touch here on my body is as fragrant as sandal juice;
Her arm round my neck is cool and soft as a necklace of pearls;
What in her is there that is not dear,
Save only the misery of separation from her?

*A. Berriedale Keith*

## FROM "MALATIMADHAVA," A DRAMA *by Bhavabhuti*

THE MOUNTAIN

This mountain with its towering rocks delights
The eye: its peaks grow dark with gathering clouds;
Its groves are thronged with peacocks eloquent
In joy; the trees upon its slopes are bright
With birds that flit about their nests; the caves
Reverberate the growl of bears; the scent
Of incense-trees is wafted, sharp and cool,
From branches broken off by elephants.

*Arthur A. Macdonell*

*This is the Indian "Romeo and Juliet" — with a happy ending.*

# LYRIC POETS

*seventh century* A.D.

## FRAGMENT

*by Mayura (first half of seventh century* A.D.)

### The God Vishnu Has Slain a Demon

The nails of Vishnu,
Who had assumed the guise of a lion,
Dabbled in the waves and whirlpools of the stream of blood.
And wallowed in flesh, as if in mud,
And with fragments of the joints of his massive bones
Made a mouthful of white lotus-stalks.
They enjoyed their tight clutch on his red and palpitating lotus-like heart,
And were the king-flamingos of the pool-like hole in the breast of that Daitya.
May the nails of Vishnu protect you!

*George Payn Quackenbos*

## THREE FRAGMENTS

*by Mayura*

### I

### The Cow and Her Calf

With one knee slightly bent,
And its pretty tail ceaselessly swishing,
The calf repeatedly butts with its head,
And greedily it drinks from its mother's dripping udder.

Its ears are pricked upward,
And its nose is flecked by drops of falling milk —
While the cow lows softly for pleasure
And licks its body to her heart's content.

2

### The Traveller

In a corner of the straw shelter of the tutelary goddess of the village
A wandering ascetic has lain down to rest,
While the wind, mixed with snow-flakes, blows cold,
And the edges of his two rows of teeth are chattering.
At midnight he wraps about him his patched cloak,
Heavy with its texture of old, malodorous threads.
The tatters crackle when he grasps his neck, or his toes, or his knees.

3

### Burning of the City of Tripura

Glory to the god Shiva, the Destroyer,
That the bow fell from his hands, and his eyes grew moist in pity,
When on the mantles of the women in the inner apartments of Tripura
He saw the fire trembling;
Running up their rope-like braids,
Slowly creeping over the folds of their bodices,
And flaming brightly on their laps and their rounded breasts.

*George Payn Quackenbos* and *Eunice Tietjens*

## THREE POEMS

*by King Bhartrihari (seventh century* A.D.)

I

### The Angler

The sportive Love-god in this worldly sea
Angles continually;
And women are his hook, their luring lips
The bait that bobs and dips.

We greedy fools, like silly nibbling fish,
Are landed with a swish;
And then, alack! to end the cruel game
Are broiled on love's quick flame.

2

A Question

A flower whose fragrance none hath savoured,
A singing bird no ear hath favoured,
White pearl no jeweler hath bored,
Untasted honey freshly stored
In a clean jar, unbroken fruit
That ripens now from virtue's root —
Wondering I ask, O form unspotted,
To whose delight, sweet girl, thou art allotted?

3

Warning

O wanderer heart! avoid that haunted grove,
The body of thy love;
Nor in her bosom stray, wild mountain fells
Where Love, the robber, dwells.

*Paul Elmer More*

## POEMS

## *by Bhartrihari*

1

Two Kinds of Friendship

The friendship of the rogue or saint,
Like shade at dawn or shade at noon,
Starts large and slowly grows more faint,
Or, starting faint, grows larger soon.

2

ABSENCE AND UNION

Absence is union dear
When hearts are one;
Union is absence drear,
When love is done.

3

HINDRANCES

'Twould not be hard, through life's gray sea
To find the track;
But fawn-eyed women hinder me
And hold me back.

*Arthur W. Ryder*

## WISDOM

*by Bhartrihari*

When but a little I had learned, in my own partial eyes
I seemed a perfect Solon and immeasurably wise;
But when a little higher I had climbed in wisdom's school
The fever-fit was over and I knew myself a fool.

*C. H. Tawney*

## REFLECTIONS

*by Bhartrihari*

I

It is easy to satisfy one who is ignorant,
Even easier to satisfy a connoisseur;
But not the creator himself can please the man
Who has just a morsel of knowledge.

2

Apply what test you will to a man of courage,
His constancy will never be false to itself.
Turn over the fire;
None the less the flame will mount upward.

3

Those that brought us up are long departed;
Those that grew old along with us are no more than a memory.
We that remain are threatened at every moment by the same fate,
Broken like the trees on a sand-bank.

4

To man is allotted a span of a hundred years;
Half of that passes in sleep;
Of the other half one half is spent in childhood and old age;
The rest is passed in service with illness, separation, and pain as companions.
How can mortals find joy in life
That is like bubbles on the waves of the sea?

*A. Berriedale Keith*

# LATER POETS

## FROM THE "CHAURAPANCHASIKA," THE "FIFTY STANZAS"

*by Kashmirian Bilhana (eleventh century* A.D.)

*Tradition says — though without much historical warrant — that the author of this poem loved a princess and, when their love was discovered, was condemned to death. Whereupon he wrote the fifty stanzas from which these are taken. The king was so impressed that he forgave the poet, and bestowed on him the hand of his daughter.*

Even now
My thought is all of this gold-tinted king's daughter
With garlands tissue and golden buds,
Smoke tangles of her hair, and sleeping or waking
Feet trembling in love, full of pale languor;
My thought is clinging as to a lost learning
Slipped down out of the minds of men,
Labouring to bring her back into my soul.

Even now
I bring her back, ah, wearied out with love
So that her slim feet could not bear her up;
Curved falls of her hair down on her white cheeks;
In the confusion of her coloured vests
Speaking that guarded giving up, and her scented arms
Lay like cool bindweed over against my neck.

Even now
She swims back in the crowning hour of love
All red with wine her lips have given to drink,
Soft round the mouth with camphor and faint blue

Tinted upon the lips, her slight body,
Her great live eyes, the colourings of herself
A clear perfection; sighs of musk outstealing
And powdered wood spice heavy of Cashmir.

Even now
Death sends me the flickering of powdery lids
Over wild eyes and the pity of her slim body
All broken with the weariness of joy;
The little red flowers of her breasts to be my comfort
Moving above scarves, and for my sorrow
Wet crimson lips that once I marked as mine.

Even now
I seem to see my prison walls come close,
Built up of darkness, and against that darkness
A girl no taller than my breast and very tired,
Leaning upon the bed and smiling, feeding
A little bird and lying slender as ash trees,
Sleepily aware as I told of the green
Grapes and the small bright-coloured river flowers.

Even now
They chatter her weakness through the two bazaars
Who was so strong to love me. And small men
That buy and sell for silver being slaves
Crinkle the fat about their eyes; and yet
No Prince of the Cities of the Sea has taken her,
Leading to his grim bed. Little lonely one,
You clung to me as a garment clings; my girl.

Even now
Only one dawn shall rise for me. The stars
Revolve to-morrow's night and I not heed.
One brief cold watch beside an empty heart
And that is all. This night she rests not well;
Oh, sleep; for there is heaviness for all the world
Except for the death-lighted heart of me.

Even now
I mind the coming and talking of wise men from towers
Where they had thought away their youth. And I, listening,
Found not the salt of the whispers of my girl,
Murmur of confused colours, as we lay near sleep;
Little wise words and little witty words,
Wanton as water, honeyed with eagerness.

Even now
I have a need to make up prayers, to speak
My last consideration of the world
To the great thirteen gods, to make my balance
Ere the soul journeys on. I kneel and say:
*Father of Light.* Leave we it burning still
That I may look at you. *Mother of the Stars,*
*Give me your* feet to kiss; I love you, dear.

Even now
I marvel at the bravery of love.
She, whose two feet might be held in one hand
And all her body on a shield of the guards,
Lashed like a gold panther taken in a pit
Tearfully valiant, when I too was taken;
Bearding her black beard father in his wrath,
Striking the soldiers with white impotent hands.

Even now
Death I take up as consolation.
Nay, were I free as the condor with his wings
Or old kings throned on violet ivory,
Night would not come without beds of green floss
And never a bed without my bright darling.
It is most fit that you strike now, black guards,
And let this fountain out before the dawn.

Even now
I know that I have savoured the hot taste of life
Lifting green cups and gold at the great feast.
Just for a small and a forgotten time

I have had full in my eyes from off my girl
The whitest pouring of eternal light.
The heavy knife. As to a gala day.

*Edward Powys Mathers*

## FROM THE "GITA GOVINDA," A LYRIC DRAMA

*by Jayadeva (twelfth century* A.D.)

*The following is a condensed version of what has been called the "Indian Song of Songs." Krishna is said to represent the human soul and Radha the spirit of intellectual and moral beauty which frees him from the slavery of his material senses. It is in form a transition between pure lyric and pure drama.*

Beautiful Radha, jasmine-bosomed Radha,
All in the springtime waited by the wood
For Krishna fair, Krishna the all-forgetful —
Krishna with earthly love's false fire consuming —
And some one of her maidens sang this song:

"I know where Krishna tarries in these early days of spring,
When every wind from warm Malay brings fragrance on its wing;
Brings fragrance stolen far away from thickets of the clove,
In jungles where the bees hum and the Koïl flutes her love;
He dances with the dancers, of a merry morris one,
All in the budding springtime, for 'tis sad to be alone.

I know how Krishna passes these hours of blue and gold,
When parted lovers sigh to meet and greet and closely hold
Hand fast to hand; and every branch upon the Vakul-tree
Droops downward with a hundred blooms, in every bloom a bee;
He is dancing with the dancers to a laughter-moving tone,
In the soft awakening springtime, when 'tis hard to live alone."

Then she, the maid of Radha, spake again;
And pointing far away between the leaves

Guided her lovely mistress where to look,
And note how Krishna wantoned in the wood
Now with this one, now that; his heart, her prize,
Panting with foolish passions, and his eyes
Beaming with too much love for those fair girls —
Fair, but not so as Radha; and she sang:

"See, Lady! how thy Krishna passes these idle hours
Decked forth in fold of woven gold, and crowned with forest-flowers;
And scented with the sandal, and gay with gems of price —
Rubies to mate his laughing lips, and diamonds like his eyes —
In the company of damsels, who dance and sing and play,
Lies Krishna, laughing, toying, dreaming his spring away.

One, with star-blossomed champak wreathed, wooes him to rest his head
On the dark pillow of her breast so tenderly outspread;
And o'er his brow with roses blown she fans a fragrance rare,
That falls on the enchanted sense like rain in thirsty air,
While the company of damsels wave many an odourous spray,
And Krishna, laughing, toying, sighs the soft spring away.

Another of that dazzling band of dwellers in the wood —
Body and bosom panting with the pulse of youthful blood —
Leans over him, as in his ear a lightsome thing to speak,
And then with leaf-soft lip imprints a kiss below his cheek;
A kiss that thrills, and Krishna turns at the silken touch
To give it back — ah, Radha! forgetting thee too much."

Thus lingered Krishna in the deep, green wood,
And gave himself, too prodigal, to those;
But Radha, heart-sick at his falling off,
Seeing her heavenly beauty slighted so,
Withdrew; and, in a bower of Paradise —
Where nectarous blossoms wove a shrine of shade,
Haunted by birds and bees of unknown skies —
She sate deep-sorrowful, and sang this strain:

"Ah, my Beloved! taken with those glances,
Ah, my Beloved! dancing those rash dances,
Ah, Minstrel! playing wrongful strains so well;
Ah, Krishna! Krishna, with the honeyed lip!
Ah, Wanderer into foolish fellowship!
My Dancer, my Delight! — I love thee still.

O Dancer! strip thy peacock-crown away,
Rise! thou whose forehead is the star of day,
With beauty for its silver halo set;
Come! thou whose greatness gleams beneath its shroud
Like Indra's rainbow shining through the cloud —
Come, for I love thee, my Beloved! yet."

*Then spake she to her maiden wistfully —*

"Go to him — win him hither — whisper low
How he may find me if he searches well;
Say, if he will — joys past his hope to know
Await him here; go now to him, and tell
Where Radha is, and that henceforth she charms
His spirit to her arms.

Yes, go! say, if he will, that he may come —
May come, my love, my longing, my desire;
May come forgiven, shriven, to me his home,
And make his happy peace; nay, and aspire
To uplift Radha's veil, and learn at length
What love is in its strength.

Lead him; say softly I shall chide his blindness,
And vex him with my angers; yet add this,
He shall not vainly sue for loving-kindness,
Nor miss to see me close, nor lose the bliss
That lives upon my lip, nor be denied
The rose-throne at my side."

*The maid came again to Radha, and she sang:*

" Low whispers the wind from Malaya
Overladen with love;
On the hills all the grass is burned yellow;
And the trees in the grove
Droop with tendrils that mock by their clinging
The thoughts of the parted;
And there lies, sore-sighing for thee,
Thy love, altered-hearted.

To him the moon's icy-chill silver
Is a sun at midday;
The fever he burns with is deeper
Than starlight can stay:
Like one who falls stricken by arrows,
With the colour departed
From all but his red wounds, so lies
Thy love, bleeding-hearted.

Mistress, sweet and bright and holy!
Meet him in that place;
Change his cheerless melancholy
Into joy and grace;
If thou hast forgiven, vex not;
If thou lovest, go,
Watching ever by the river,
Krishna listens low:

When a bird's wing stirs the roses,
When a leaf falls dead,
Twenty times he recomposes
The flower-seat he has spread:
Twenty times, with anxious glances
Seeking thee in vain,
Sighing ever by the river,
Krishna droops again.

Loosen from thy foot the bangle,
Lest its golden bell,
With a tiny, tattling jangle,

Any false tale tell:
If thou fearest that the moonlight
Will thy glad face know,
Draw those dark braids lower, Lady!
But to Krishna go.

*Radha cannot bring herself to go to Krishna, but sends for him to come to her. He is slow in doing so and she is almost in despair when he finally comes. For a little she reproaches him.*

"Krishna! my Krishna with the woodland-wreath!
Return, or I shall soften as I blame;
The while thy very lips are dark to the teeth
With dye that from her lids and lashes came,
Left on the mouth I touched. Fair traitor! go!
Say not they darkened, lacking food and sleep
Long waiting for my face; I turn it — so —
Go! ere I half believe thee, pleading deep;

But wilt thou plead, when, like a love-verse printed
On the smooth polish of an emerald,
I see the marks she stamped, the kisses dinted
Large-lettered, by her lips? thy speech withheld
Speaks all too plainly; go — abide thy choice!
If thou dost stay, I shall more greatly grieve thee;
Not records of her victory? — peace, dear voice!
Hence with that godlike brow, lest I believe thee.

*He however convinces her of his love, and she relents.*

Thus followed soft and lasting peace, and griefs
Died while she listened to his tender tongue,
Her eyes of antelope alight with love;
And while he led the way to the bridal-bower
The maidens of her train adorned her fair
With golden marriage-cloths, and sang this song:

"Follow, happy Radha! follow —
In the quiet falling twilight —

The steps of him who followed thee
So steadfastly and far;
Let us bring thee where the banjulas
Have spread a roof of crimson,
Lit up by many a marriage-lamp
Of planet, sun, and star:
For the hours of doubt are over,
And thy glad and faithful lover
Hath found the road by tears and prayers
To thy divinest side;
And thou wilt not now deny him
One delight of all thy beauty,
But yield up open-hearted
His pearl, his prize, his bride."

So came she where he stood, awaiting her
At the bower's entry, like a god to see,
With marriage-gladness and the grace of heaven.
The great pearl set upon his glorious head
Shone like a moon among the leaves, and shone
Like stars the gems that kept her gold gown close:
But still a little while she paused — abashed
At her delight, of her deep joy afraid —
And they that tended her sang once more this:

" Enter, thrice-happy! enter, thrice-desired!
And let the gates of Hari shut thee in
With the soul destined to thee from of old.

Tremble not! lay thy lovely shame aside;
Lay it aside with thine unfastened zone,
And love him with the love that knows not fear,
Because it fears not change; enter thou in,
Flower of all sweet and stainless womanhood!
Forever to grow bright, forever new.

Enter the house of Love, O loveliest!
Enter the marriage-bower, most beautiful!
And take and give the joy that Hari grants.

Thy heart has entered, let thy feet go too!
Lo, Krishna! lo, the one that thirsts for thee!
Give him the drink of amrit from thy lips."

Then she, no more delaying, entered straight;
Her step a little faltered, but her face
Shone with unutterable quick love; and — while
The music of her bangles passed the porch —
Shame, which had lingered in her downcast eyes,
Departed shamed . . . and like the mighty deep,
Which sees the moon and rises, all his life
Uprose to drink her beams.

*Sir Edwin Arnold*

## DIALOGUE

*by an Unknown Author*

*(from an anthology of the 14th century)*

O well beloved, remember me!
No; I will not remember thee.
But remembrance is the duty of the heart.
I have no heart left, for thou hast stolen it from me.

*A. Berriedale Keith*

# *Appendices*

# *Bibliography*

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*arranged chronologically in the order of their publication. Those from which quotation has been made are marked with an asterisk.*

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## A NOTE ON THE TYPE IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

*This book is set on the linotype in Caslon, so called after William Caslon (1692–1766), the first of a famous English family of type-designers and founders. He was originally an apprentice to an engraver of gun-locks and gun-barrels in London. In 1716 he opened his own shop, for silver-chasing and making bookbinders' stamps. The printers John Watts and William Bowyer, admirers of his skill in cutting ornaments and letters, advanced him money to equip himself for type-founding, which he began in 1720. The fonts he cut in 1722 for Bowyer's sumptuous folio edition of John Selden, published in 1726, excited great interest. A specimen sheet of type faces, issued in 1734, made Caslon's superiority to all other letter-cutters of the time, English or Dutch, quickly recognized, and soon his types, or types modelled on his style, were being used by most English printers, supplanting the Dutch types that had formerly prevailed. In style Caslon was a reversion to earlier type styles. Its characteristics are remarkable regularity and symmetry, as well as beauty in the shape and proportion of the letters; its general effect is clear and open, but not weak or delicate. For uniformity, clearness, and readability it has perhaps never been surpassed. After Caslon's death his eldest son, also named William (1720–78), carried on the business successfully. Then followed a period of neglect of nearly fifty years. In 1843 Caslon type was revived by the then firm of Caslon for William Pickering and has since been one of the most widely used of all type designs in English and American printing.*

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